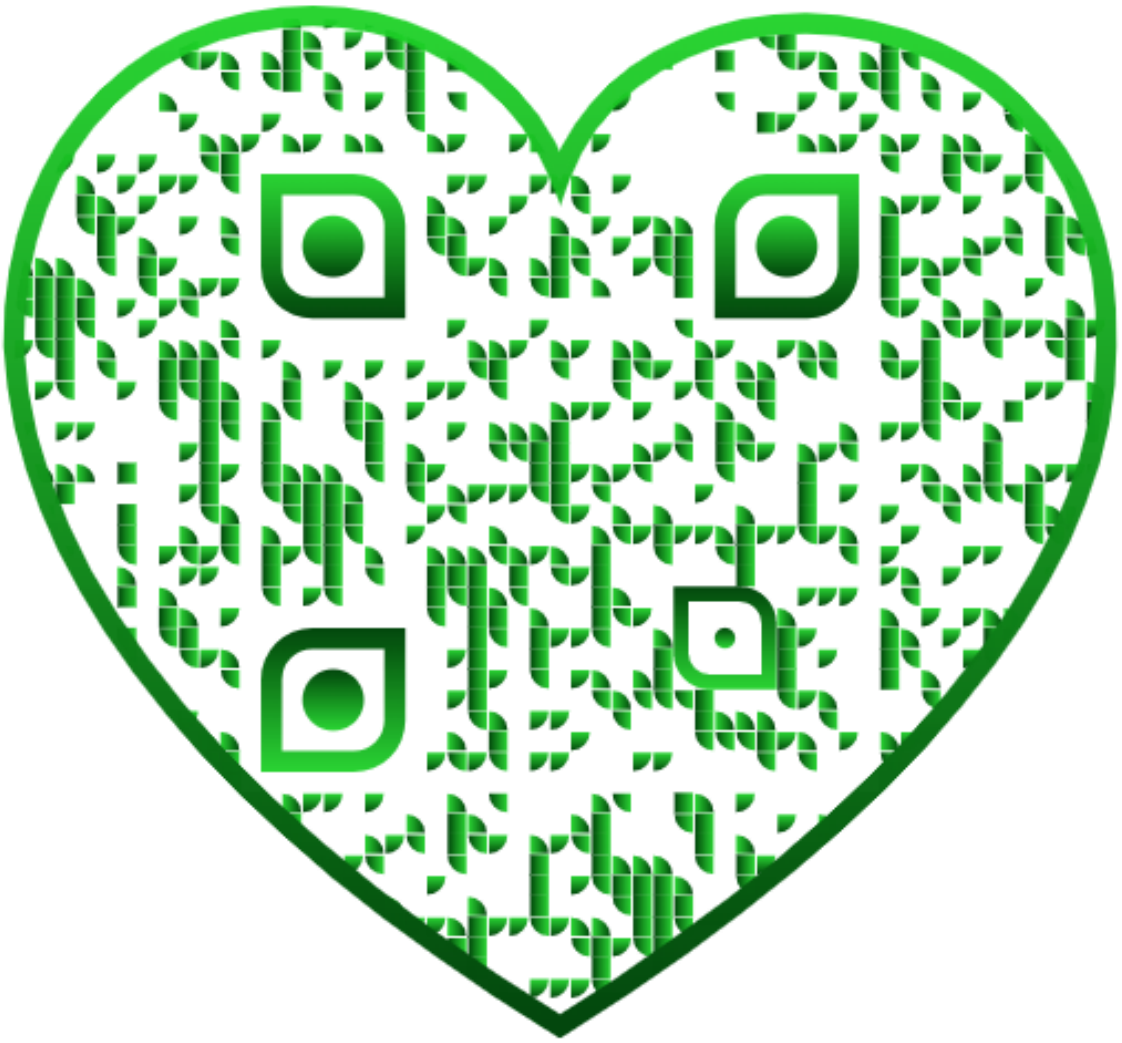
MAKE YOUR OWN FRESH DAIRY PRODUCTS

EASY RECIPES FOR BUTTER, YOGURT, SOUR CREAM, CRÈME FRAICHE, CREAM CHEESE, RICOTTA, AND MORE!

# THE HOME CREAMERY

KATHY FARRELL-KINGSLEY



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# INTRODUCTION
## SETTING UP YOUR HOME CREAMERY

**There’s an old saying that cheese is milk’s leap toward immortality.** And perhaps no one feels more passionately about this adage than those who make their own dairy products and soft cheeses. It’s an ancient piece of edible culture that Americans are just now beginning to appreciate.

Home-produced soft, unripened cheeses and dairy products have a wholesome good taste that no shop product can imitate. By making these products at home, you’ll enjoy a fascinating and very satisfying craft, with a delicious and healthy end result. It’s hard to beat the fresh flavor, nutritional value, and low cost of homemade dairy and soft, fresh cheeses.

You don’t need a commercial kitchen to produce great-tasting dairy products and fresh, soft cheese at home. Dairy products and most soft cheeses can be made in a matter of hours with equipment that you probably have on hand.

# INGREDIENTS

The basis of cheese, of course, is milk, and almost any kind will do. Raw, fresh milk (as opposed to pasteurized) can be used, but it has many more variables to work with, particularly in the handling. Some cheese makers, especially the French, prefer to use raw milk because they credit the naturally occurring bacteria in the raw milk for adding depth of flavor. Raw milk, also known as unprocessed, contains milk fat, which rises to the top as cream. When the milk is processed, most of the cream is removed from the milk. The amount of fat remaining determines the type of milk that is produced, such as whole, low-fat, or skim.

Unless you own cows or goats or are friends with a farmer, it's not easy to find raw milk in the United States, though sometimes raw milk is available at farmers' markets or at the farms themselves. In most states, it's illegal to sell milk raw because of potential contamination. If raw milk is not kept cold enough, bacteria will start to grow and by the time you get to cheese making, it could be curdled and/or contain harmful bacteria. So the key word here is caution: The safest milk to work with is pasteurized, unless you really know what you're doing.

Pasteurization is the process of heating raw milk to at least 145°F for at least 30 minutes or to 161°F for 15 seconds. The milk is then cooled quickly to 45°F or lower. Ultraheat pasteurization involves heating the milk to 274°F for 2 to 4 seconds. Ultraheat (UHT) pasteurized milk, however, does not work well for making cheese. The high-heat process affects the whey proteins in the milk, and they will not form curds — white, custardlike masses — that are firm enough for cheese making and dairy products.

Cheese is made by coagulating, or curdling, milk solids into curds. Curds start off soft, then release liquid called whey as they continue to firm. Using pasteurized milk will give you more control over outcome, and in the end it will result in your cheese making being more successful. Skim and low-fat milk varieties can be used, but keep in mind the end products will be less rich and may have less flavor than cheese made with whole milk or cream.

To make the fresh cheeses and dairy products in this book, you can use cow's milk or goat's milk or even sheep's milk. Just always purchase the freshest possible and highest quality milk or cream. Whole milk will always work the

best because it has the highest butterfat content, but low-fat and skim varieties are given as alternatives for some of the recipes in this book. Goat's milk has a slightly higher butterfat content than cow's milk, but the butterfat is in smaller globules than that of cow's milk. This makes the milk from goats easier to digest and will also produce a soft cheese.

Besides milk, other ingredients that you may need are:

**RENNET**. Adding rennet causes milk coagulation. Rennet is either animal or vegetable based. It is available in tablet or liquid form and is always diluted with water before use. If the rennet is not diluted it will not distribute evenly in the cheese. Both tablets and liquid come with dilution instructions and strengths but generally are diluted as 3 drops of liquid rennet or ½ tablet to ¼ cup of cool water (50 to 65°F). Rennet may be purchased from cheese-making supply houses. (See Sources, page 209.)

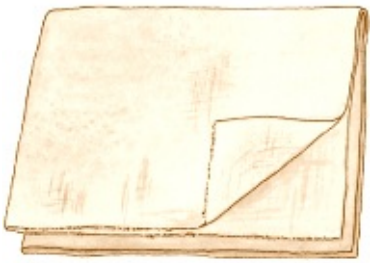
**CULTURES**. Cheese cultures are usually divided into two basic groups, thermophilic and mesophilic. Thermophilic is a heat-loving culture. It is used for cheeses that must be heated to a higher temperature, such as mozzarella, Parmesan, or Swiss and Italian-type cheeses. Yogurt is made with a thermophilic culture. Mesophilic is a nonheat-loving culture that would be destroyed at higher temperatures. It's used for 90 percent of cheese making. Buttermilk is made with a mesophilic culture.

Cultures change the milk sugar (lactose) into lactic acid. They can be purchased as a freeze-dried powder that you simply add to the milk when making cheese. Stored in the freezer, cultures last indefinitely. See Sources (page 209) for cheese-making supply houses that provide cultures.

# EQUIPMENT

You do not need any fancy or expensive equipment to make dairy products and soft cheese at home. The basic equipment you'll need includes:

**LARGE POT.** For making dairy products and cheese, use only a stainless steel or unchipped enamel pot with a heavy bottom. A thick, heavy bottom will help to prevent the milk from scorching during the heating process. You can also use a stainless steel double boiler. Acidity levels in milk will cause the aluminum in aluminum pans to leach into your product. Any stirring or cutting utensils are fine, as long as they're not made of aluminum.



**CHEESECLOTH.** Don't buy cheesecloth from the grocery store. The holes are too big and the curds will drain right through it. Purchase from cheese-making supply houses or specialty kitchenware shops a type of cheesecloth called "butter muslin," which is 100 percent cotton and so fine that when you hold it up, you can barely see through it. It can be washed with bleach and hot, soapy

water and be used over and over again.

**COLANDER.** This is for draining the curds. Any kind of sturdy colander will do because it will be lined with butter muslin. Some recipes require a fine-meshed sieve as well.

**THERMOMETER.** There are special dairy thermometers, but a food thermometer that has a range from 0 to 220°F and can be inserted at least 2 inches into the milk will work. The kind that can clamp onto the edge of the pot is best because it will allow you to obtain an accurate temperature reading as you heat the milk without having to hold your hand over the hot milk.

**LADLE.** A wide, perforated stainless steel ladle, also called a “skimmer,” works best for cheese making. You’ll use this to scoop the curds from the pot to the colander to drain.

**KNIFE.** For some recipes, you’ll need a knife for cutting the curds. A “curd knife,” with a long blade and a flat, rather than pointed, end works well, but any

long, flat-ended knife of this description is fine, as long as the blade is 10 or more inches, so that you can reach the bottom of the pot to cut the curds. Curd knives may be purchased from cheese-making supply houses. (See Sources, page 209.) If you can't find a curd knife, use a long-bladed kitchen knife or a long cake-decorating spatula.

**STRING.** For some of the recipes, you'll need some kind of heavy-gauge string to hang the cheese to drain. New shoelaces work well also. If you tie the corners of the muslin into a knot, you can also use a bungee cord to hang the bag from a kitchen faucet.

**CHEESE MOLDS.** Cheese molds come in a variety of sizes and shapes and are used to form the drained curds of many types of soft cheeses, such as ricotta and cream cheese. They're available in stainless steel, food-grade plastic, and ceramic, and they have holes through which the whey drains as the cheese sets. Cheese molds are available at cheese-making supply houses and some specialty kitchen shops.

### CLEANING YOUR EQUIPMENT

All equipment and utensils must be extremely clean before you use them in cheesemaking. Unclean equipment will invite unfriendly bacteria into the process. You can either thoroughly wash and rinse all equipment and utensils or sterilize them.

**TO WASH:** Use hot, soapy water, rinse thoroughly in hot water, and then let air-dry.

**TO STERILIZE:** Boil for no less than 10 mintutes in enough water to cover. Remove with tongs and then let air-dry.

Wash or sterilize all equipment and utensils after using them, and then again before using them. Also, it's a good practice to rinse all utensils in hot water after they come in contact with ingredients during the dairy or cheese-making process.

# THE BASIC STEPS

With the ingredients and the equipment described here and the mastery of a few easy techniques, you'll be on your way to producing fresh cheese and dairy products successfully at home in no time at all.

**HEATING THE MILK.** The first step in making all cheeses (whether soft or hard) and many dairy products is to heat the milk. During this process the sugar in the milk starts converting into lactic acid. The acid thickens, which helps with coagulation in further processing, and also helps the curd to separate from the whey. The acid also provides flavor.

**ADDING STARTER.** Starters, such as vinegar, buttermilk, yogurt, and cultures (mesophilic and thermophilic), continue converting the lactose in the milk to lactic acid. The starter is stirred into the milk constantly for 30 seconds so that it will be distributed evenly. After the initial stirring, the milk is left undisturbed so that the coagulation can begin.

**ADDING RENNET.** Rennet is used for making cheese but not for making dairy products. It's added after the milk has ripened. The rennet causes the milk to coagulate and form curds. The right amount of rennet is needed: Too little and the milk will not set enough; too much and the curd will become too firm. Rennet usually must be diluted so that it can be distributed evenly throughout the milk. Stirring the milk constantly for 30 seconds after adding the rennet allows for this even distribution. After the rennet has been incorporated, the milk is covered and left to stand for the curd to fully form.

**CUTTING THE CURDS.** After the curd has formed, it's cut into pieces of about 1 to

2 inches. Cutting the curd allows the whey to drain out. The curd is ready to be cut when it has a clean break, meaning it separates cleanly and clearly: A knife or thermometer inserted into the curd at a 45-degree angle will separate the curd firmly and cleanly if the curd has reached a clean break. The best way to cut the curd is with a curd knife or a long-bladed stainless steel knife. Make uniform straight cuts through the curds to the bottom of the pot in a cross-hatch or checkerboard pattern. Then, with the knife at a 45-degree slant, cut the curd again and repeat, following the previous cut lines.

**DRAINING.** The curds are drained so the whey can be removed. The curds can be poured into a butter muslin–lined strainer or scooped with a perforated ladle into a colander and left to drain for a specified period of time. The butter muslin holding the curds can also be made into a bag and hung over the sink to drain further.

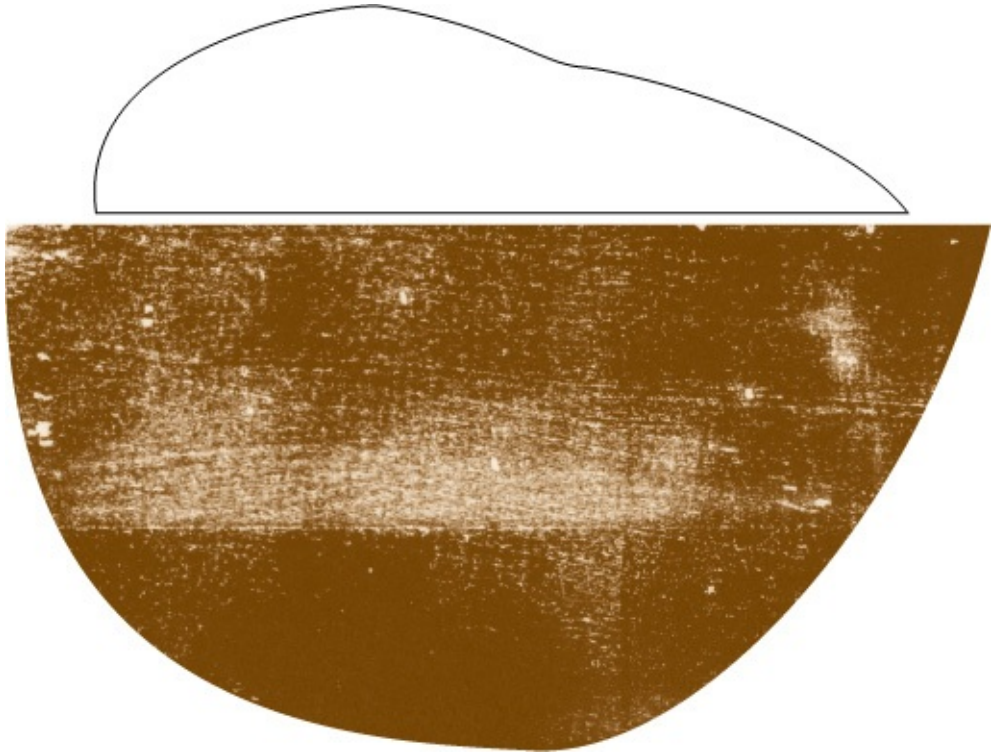
**TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

- Before you start to make dairy products and fresh cheese, set out everything you need: thermometer, perforated ladle, and a butter muslin-lined colander or sieve that has been set over a large bowl.
- Always let the finished dairy or cheese product cool to room temperature (65 to 72°F) before refrigerating.
- Many of the recipes in this book call for ingredients to be at room temperature, which means between 65 and 72°F. When you make dairy

temperature, which means between 65 and 72°F. When you make dairy products and soft cheeses, beginning with ingredients at room temperature will expedite the process. To bring refrigerated ingredients to room temperature, set them on a kitchen counter for 1 to 2 hours, or until they reach the desired temperature.

- If you plan to make several batches of cheese or dairy products, always clean the pot between recipes, and use a fresh piece of butter muslin (or a well-rinsed piece) for every batch.

# PART ONE
# CULTURED DAIRY PRODUCTS



YOGURT

KEFIR

BUTTER

PIIMA BUTTER

BUTTERMILK

CRÈME FRAÎCHE

QUARK

SOUR CREAM

Cultured dairy products — yogurt, buttermilk, kefir, and some soft cheeses — taste great and are easy to make at home by simply adding cultures of selected

strains of yeast or bacteria to start the process of fermentation. The cultures add rich and tangy flavors to the dairy products.

**People have been making yogurt** and other cultured dairy products for thousands of years. The first cultured milk product probably occurred spontaneously. Folklore describes the story of a traveling nomad in the Turkish desert. Legend has it that he kept some milk in a goatskin bag hung across his camel. After his bag traveled with him in the hot sun and was agitated constantly, the milk was transformed into a tangy custard. The warmth, bacteria in the bag, and agitation of the camel's movements were all ideal for making the first yogurt!

Not only do cultured milk products taste great, they're also good for you because they contain probiotics, sometimes referred to as "good" or "friendly" bacteria. According to the National Institutes of Health, there's encouraging evidence that probiotics can boost your immune system and may also help protect you against cancer and high cholesterol. Cultured dairy foods are also easier on the stomach than other dairy foods because bacteria are already digested partially with the milk protein.

Most good bacteria come in two basic groups:

**BIFIDOBACTERIUM AND LACTOBACILLUS.** Within these two groups there are many different species. Probably the most familiar good bacteria are *Lactobacillus acidophilus,* found in yogurt. These friendly bacteria exist naturally among the hundred or so types already present in our gastrointestinal system, but they're under constant siege by human indulgences such as coffee and alcohol. They also die when we take antibiotics. Making and eating your own cultured dairy products can ensure that your body is well-stocked with these health-enhancing bacteria.

# YOGURT

**You are in for a real treat if you've never tasted homemade yogurt.** It has a far-superior taste to the commercial variety. Instead of the sweet taste that many of us are used to in commercial products, homemade yogurt tastes fresh and tangy. In addition, homemade yogurt isn't as smooth or as thick as commercial yogurts. It doesn't have the added sweeteners, stabilizers, and natural or artificial flavors found in commercially prepared products.

Note that goat's milk or sheep's milk can be used to make yogurt, and skim or low-fat milk can be used as effectively as whole milk, though yogurt made with whole milk will have a thicker consistency. All homemade yogurt will separate. The whey may pool, but it can be mixed in again or spooned off for use in other fermented foods or in recipes such as Twisted Whey-Wheat Rolls (page 174). Yogurt can also be made easily into delicious low-fat cheese (called "yogurt cheese") that has a consistency somewhere between sour cream and cream cheese.

# HOMEMADE YOGURT

## INGREDIENTS

**4 cups (1 quart) milk,** skim or whole works best

**¼ cup yogurt starter** (see Note)

The most important factor to keep in mind when making yogurt or any cultured dairy product is that everything must be perfectly clean so that you don't invite any unwanted bacteria into your mix. It's not necessary to sterilize equipment and utensils, but they should be washed thoroughly in hot, soapy water, then rinsed and air-dried.

***Note:*** For your first batch, you can use store-bought yogurt for the starter. Just make sure the label says it has live cultures. Otherwise, purchase a commercial starter from a cheese-making supply house.

Temperature recommendations on packaged starters may vary, so be sure to read the instructions before you begin.

**MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES**

# 1.

Heat the milk to 185°F in a large, heavy-bottomed pot. Remove from heat and allow it to cool to between 105 and 115°F, about 5 minutes.

# 2.

Stir in the starter and mix well. Pour the mixture into a commercial yogurt maker, if using, and follow manufacturer’s instructions. Alternatively, pour the mixture into a clean, quart glass jar and put on the lid. While the culture is forming, the temperature of the milk should remain at about 110°F. (See next page for tips on regulating the temperature.)

# 3.

Incubate the yogurt for 6 to 12 hours, depending on how firm and tart you want the final product to be. When the curd is well formed, refrigerate the yogurt. A little whey may form around the edges — simply pour it off or stir it in when you’re ready to use the yogurt.

**To regulate the temperature or incubate the yogurt, try one of these ideas:**

- Put the quart jar into a medium-size picnic cooler with a few jars of hot water, then close the cooler.
- Put the quart jar of yogurt mixture into a gas oven with a pilot light. Do not turn on the oven.
- Put the mixture into a thermos bottle.
- Wrap the jar of yogurt in a blanket.

## BENEFITS OF YOGURT

Eating yogurt has long been associated with good health and longevity. The ancient Assyrians called it *lebeny* (meaning “life”), and today, food scientists consider yogurt a probiotic food, meaning that it contains beneficial, or friendly, bacteria. There is a long-standing belief that probiotic foods such as yogurt promote intestinal and vaginal health, improve lactose intolerance, build stronger bones, enhance immunity, lower blood pressure, and may even have anticancer and weight-loss effects. Beyond this, yogurt is also a good source of protein, B vitamins, calcium, and other nutrients. Remember that for yogurt to have these benefits, it must have “live active cultures,” which your homemade version will have.

# YOGURT CHEESE

**INGREDIENTS**

**4 cups (1 quart) plain yogurt**
**1 teaspoon salt**

You can use homemade yogurt (or commercial yogurt) to make this spreadable soft cheese. It's great for dips, spreads, and desserts such as cheesecake and pies. Yogurt cheese takes on the flavor of whatever you mix it with. That means you can mix it with ice cream, peanut butter, mayonnaise, or other foods to reduce the fat calories.

# 1.

Line a strainer or colander with a double layer of butter muslin and set it in a large bowl. Spoon the yogurt into the muslin and let drain for 30 minutes.

**MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES**

# 2.

Tie together the ends of the butter muslin. In the refrigerator, let the yogurt drain into the bowl for 8 to 24 hours, depending on the desired consistency. The longer the yogurt sits, the thicker the yogurt cheese.

# 3.

Transfer the cheese from the cloth to a medium bowl and stir in the salt. You can

Transfer the cheese from the cloth to a medium bowl and stir in the salt. You can save the whey for other uses if desired. Cover the cheese tightly and refrigerate up to 1 week.

## YOGURT-MAKING TIPS

- Yogurt made from pasteurized milk is often more successful because the "friendly" and "unfriendly" bacteria are not competing.
- Be careful not to use milk that is too hot when making yogurt. Temperatures over 115°F can kill the acidophilus.
- Adding more starter will make the yogurt more sour rather than thicker. Powdered milk and unflavored gelatin can be added for thickness. Add ⅓ cup powdered milk powder to 1 quart milk before the milk is heated, then sprinkle 1 teaspoon unflavored gelatin over milk and let stand 5 minutes to soften. Stir the milk while heating to dissolve the gelatin.

# YOGURT TROUBLESHOOTING

## IF YOUR YOGURT IS TOO THIN …

- The milk may have cooled too much before the starter culture was added.
- The yogurt may not have been kept warm enough during incubation.
- The starter may have been too weak.
- Antibiotics that may be in farm-fresh milk could have killed the starter. If using farm-fresh milk, allow it to stand in the refrigerator for about 2 days to diminish the antibiotics before using.

## IF YOUR YOGURT HAS CURDLED…

- The milk may not have sufficiently cooled before the starter culture was added. The hot milk can cause the starter to curdle.

## IF YOUR YOGURT HAS AN OFF TASTE …

- You may have over-boiled the milk without proper stirring, which can cause the milk to scorch and give the yogurt a burned taste.
- You may have over-incubated it (allowed the milk and yogurt to sit for longer than required), giving the yogurt an overly strong, tart taste.
- You may have used containers that were not entirely clean. Foreign bacteria may have entered your yogurt and produced an off taste.

# KEFIR

**Kefir (pronounced ka-FEER) is a fermented milk drink** that originated in the Caucasus Mountains in Russia, where it's still a daily food staple. It's tangier than yogurt but sweeter than buttermilk. You can buy packaged kefir culture, but true aficionados use kefir grains — little white kernels about the size of tapioca that swell and initiate fermentation. A good kefir contains many different types of friendly bacteria as well as some yeasts, and it packs one of the strongest health punches of all the cultured dairy foods.

Natural carbonation makes kefir fizzy and perfect for smoothies, popular among kefir fans. Simply pour the liquid into a blender and mix with fresh fruit such as strawberries, blueberries, and cut-up fresh mango.

# HOMEMADE KEFIR

**INGREDIENTS**

**¼ cup kefir grains**
**2 cups milk**

Kefir is a tangy, slightly bubbly drink made with live kefir grains. It’s very easy to make, and as you continue to make it, the number of kefir grains you have will grow. You can share some of them with friends or store them to use again and again.

# 1.

Place the kefir grains in a clean pint glass jar and add the milk. Stir gently, then cover loosely and allow the mixture to sit for 12 to 24 hours at room temperature.

**MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES**

# 2.

When the kefir culture is ready, the mixture will have thickened and some whey may have separated and the grains will float to the surface. Gently stir the mixture with a wooden spoon. Strain the kefir through a fine sieve, stirring the grains gently (do not press them). Cover and refrigerate the kefir up to 3 weeks.

# 3.

Do not rinse the grains. You can save them for your next batch in one of two ways: You can let them air-dry on a piece of muslin for a day or two, then store them for 8 to 10 months in a plastic bag set in a cool, dry place. Allow a few extra days to get them started when you’re ready to reactivate the grains.

Another method is to place the grains in a clean jar, cover them with milk, and store them in the refrigerator. The fermentation will slow, allowing you to store them for a few weeks. Strain the grains before using them in your next batch of kefir liquid.

# KEFIR-MAKING TIPS

**Making kefir is a very simple process, but kefir grains are a living food and therefore subject to a fair degree of natural variation. In other words, making kefir is more an art than a science. This means you'll find as many different ways of making kefir as there are people making it, and the resulting products can have a variety of flavors. Here are just a few variations in the kefir-making process that will affect the end product:**

- There's a wide variety in the length of time that kefir is left to ferment. Longer fermentation will increase the sourness of the liquid. In the end, how long to leave it depends on how sour you like it. People who like it lightly fermented will leave it for only 12 hours. Those who like a stronger and more active liquid will leave it for 2 or 3 days.
- If timing isn't a determining factor, you can slow the fermenting process by refrigerating the kefir mixture for about 5 days. The cooler temperature will slow the process and produce a thicker product. Strain the liquid and store in the refrigerator in an airtight container. Save the grains for another batch.
- There's also a double-fermentation technique that will increase the sourness of the kefir. First, ferment in the usual way by adding the culture to the milk and leaving for 12 to 24 hours. Strain the mixture (save the grains for another batch) and leave the kefir liquid at room temperature for another 12 to 24 hours to ferment again at a slower rate. Cover and refrigerate.
- The kefir culture is endlessly self-propagating. After each batch you'll have a few more grains as the culture grows. It's a good idea to rotate the grains you're using for your regular kefir-making so that they get a chance to restore their vitality.
- Each time you make a fresh batch of kefir reusing the same grains, you'll need to add to them a greater quantity of milk.

# KEFIR TROUBLESHOOTING

## IF YOUR KEFIR TASTES TOO STRONG OR TOO WEAK …

- Experiment with the ratio of kefir grains to the amount of milk. For a stronger taste, use anywhere between a 4:1 to 12:1 ratio of milk to ¼ cup kefir grains. For a weaker taste, use from a 12:1 to 24:1 ratio.

## IF YOUR KEFIR HAS AN OFF TASTE …

- Rinse the kefir grains with filtered water, then store them in the refrigerator for 1 day in a jar covered with filtered water. Drain the kefir grains, and they will be ready to make a new batch.

# BUTTER

**For years, making butter** was strictly a home- or farm-based activity. Wooden or crockery dasher-type churns were turned by hand to slosh the cream around until solid butter particles separated from the liquid and massed together. The remaining liquid was buttermilk. Today, homemade butter is a rare taste treat, but making it is a great way to discover the magical properties of milk, and there's nothing that compares to its fresh taste and silky smooth texture. The principle is really quite simple: Just agitate cream long enough and it will turn into butter!

You can use many different tools to churn your butter — I like to use a food processor, but my kids like to use a simple jar with a tight lid. It's a fun challenge to shake until you just can't go on, then pass the jar to someone else, round and round, until it's ready. It's good exercise, and kids really think it's fun.

Besides cow's milk, butter can also be produced from the milk of buffalo, camel, goat, sheep, and horse. Sometimes, cultures are added to ferment the milk sugars to lactic acid before the milk is churned into butter. These cultures will produce butter that is rich with a fuller, slightly tangy flavor. Cultured butter is a common European tradition but is less common in America.

**OLD-FASHIONED BUTTER CHURN**

**ELECTRIC BUTTER CHURN**

If you plan on making butter on a regular basis, you'll want to invest in a churn (available at dairy supply houses or sometimes second-hand on eBay and at auctions). A hand churn resembles a large, pear-shaped glass jar. A paddle attachment is screwed on as the lid, and users turn a crank handle to create the churning action. If you wish, you can also purchase an electric churn, and if you're really adventurous, you can still find those old-fashioned wooden upright churns used in pioneer days!

# HOMEMADE BUTTER

METHOD 1

**INGREDIENTS**

**4 cups (2 pints) heavy cream**

**½ teaspoon salt**

For the best results, the cream should be at about 60°F when you begin. If it's too warm, your butter will be soft and won't keep well; if it's too cold, your butter will never form.

# 1.

In a food processor fitted with the metal blade, process the cream until it turns to fine, rice-grain-size solid pieces. It will go through several stages to get to this point, from frothy to soft whipped cream to coarse whipped cream to solid bits, and the color will change from off-white to pale yellow. This will take from 5 to 8 minutes.

**MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 40 MINUTES**

# 2.

Let the butter stand about 5 minutes. The liquid, called buttermilk, will separate from the butter during this time. Set a fine-meshed sieve over a medium bowl. Scrape the butter mixture into the strainer and let the buttermilk drain. Strain the

buttermilk again through a fine-meshed sieve, and save for another use if desired.

# 3.

Transfer the butter to a colander and knead it with a wooden spoon, potato masher, or two forks to remove excess water and blend granules. Pour off the water occasionally, and continue kneading until most of the water has been removed and the butter becomes firmer. This will take about 10 minutes. Mix in salt; this will help retard spoilage as well as add flavor. Keep working until the butter is dense and creamy and all liquid has been worked out, about 10 minutes.

# 4.

You can form the butter into any shape you wish at this stage: You can make a simple block or press it into ramekins or molds. When you're done, wrap the butter in wax paper and keep it in the refrigerator.

***Note:*** Using slightly ripened cream to make butter gives it a more complex flavor. To ripen cream, leave it at room temperature for 12 to 24 hours, or until it starts to look shiny and tastes a bit acidic. Do not let it set out longer than 24 hours, or it will become sour-tasting.

**BUTTER STORAGE**

Fresh butter should be kept in a covered dish and refrigerated up to several weeks. For longer storage, double wrap the butter with plastic wrap and freeze up to 9 months.

# HOMEMADE BUTTER

METHOD 2

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 cup heavy cream** at 60°F
**¼ teaspoon salt**

This method is so easy, demonstrating how simple it is to make butter. All you need is cream and a jar. The only variable here is the quality of the cream you use; the better the cream, the better-tasting the butter.

# 1.

Pour the cream into a clean, pint jar with a tight-fitting lid. Screw on the lid and shake the jar until the butterfat becomes solid and separates from the liquid, 15 to 20 minutes.

**MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP**
**PREP TIME: 45 MINUTES**

# 2.

Pour off the buttermilk and save for another use. Rinse the butter by adding a little cold water to the solid butterfat in the jar and shaking it again. Do this several times until the rinse water runs clear. Drain off the liquid.

# 3.

Turn the butter into a medium bowl and knead with a wooden spoon, potato masher, or two forks to remove any excess liquid and blend solids. Pour off the liquid occasionally until most of it has been removed. Mix in salt. Keep working the butter until all the solids have blended together and all liquid has been worked out, about 15 minutes.

## BUTTER TROUBLESHOOTING

### IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO FORM BUTTER SOLIDS …

- The cream did not have a high enough butterfat content. For making butter, be sure to use heavy cream with a fat content between 36 and 40 percent.
- The cream was not cold enough when you began working with it. If the cream is too warm, the butter solids may not firm up properly.

# PIIMA BUTTER

**Piima (pee-ma) is a culture based on the extract of the butterwort plant.** Some sources suggest that using piima to make dairy products originated in Scandinavia when farmers noticed that milk curdled faster from cows that grazed on butterwort, a northern European wild herb. The culture was then extracted carefully and used in making butter, cultured cream, and buttermilk. In Scandinavia, it also became a practice to pour fresh milk or cream over the butterwort leaves before making dairy products with it. Either way, using piima to make butter is an extremely simple process. Products made with the piima culture will have a slight tang, similar to buttermilk. Piima can be purchased through mail-order herb distributors or on the Internet (see Sources, page 209). It comes in a cream form.

# PIIMA BUTTER

**INGREDIENTS**

**2 tablespoons piima culture** (in the form of a cream)
**4 cups (2 pints) heavy cream**

# 1.

Put the culture into a clean quart jar. Add the cream and stir. Screw on the lid and store at 70 to 75°F (on top of the refrigerator is a good spot) until the mixture begins to thicken, about 24 hours

# 2.

After the mixture has thickened to a custardlike consistency (about 1 day) remove a few tablespoons as a starter for another batch if desired. Store the starter in an airtight jar in the refrigerator.

**MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES**

# 3.

Shake the jar of piima butter for about 15 minutes or until solid butter begins to form, surrounded by the liquid buttermilk. Pour off the buttermilk (save for anther use) and spoon the butter into a small colander. Use a wooden spoon to remove excess liquid. Gently rinse the butter in the colander with cold water to remove any remaining liquid.

## SHAPING BUTTER

- To make butter balls, chill a pair of wooden butter paddles. Cut butter into tablespoon-size pats. Let butter soften slightly. It should be firm but not brittle. Roll butter pieces between the paddles to form balls. Drop each into ice water as it’s made. Drain before serving.

- To make butter curls, use a metal butter curler. Dip it into hot water before making each curl. Beginning at the far side of a firm (but not too hard) stick of butter, draw the curler toward you lightly and quickly, making a thin curled shaving of butter. Drop the curls into ice water to keep cold until serving. Drain before serving.

# BUTTERMILK

**True or real buttermilk is a by-product of homemade hand-churned butter.** Buttermilk is the liquid that remains after the butter is made. The liquid contains small particles of floating butter and some traces of butterfat. This gives buttermilk a rich, sweet flavor and makes the drink very refreshing.

But buttermilk is more than just a beverage. Experienced cooks and bakers also know that buttermilk is the secret ingredient for making exceptionally tender and delicious baked goods — from biscuits and pancakes to crumb cakes and layer cakes. Here's why: When buttermilk, which has acidic qualities, is combined with baking soda, an alkali, in a flour-based batter, bubbles of carbon dioxide begin to form. As the batter bakes, steam is created; the bubbles expand, causing the batter to rise lightly while acquiring a fine texture. The heat of the oven sets the batter and prevents it from collapsing. The result is a delicate but stable crumb. Buttermilk also adds moisture, richness, and a bit of tang.

The buttermilk sold today in cartons in your market is not the by-product of butter making; it's made by adding a special bacteria culture to milk. Also called cultured buttermilk, store-bought buttermilk may be made from skim milk with no salt added. Commercial buttermilk lacks the rich, sweet flavor and traces of butter that the original form of buttermilk has, but you can easily achieve this "pure" version by making it at home.

# BUTTERMILK

METHOD 1

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 cup whole milk**

**2 tablespoons cream of tartar *or***
**1 tablespoon white vinegar *or***
**1 tablespoon lemon juice**

This method will give you a rich, thick buttermilk because it begins with whole milk.

> ***Note:*** To use low-fat milk, mix 1 cup with 1 tablespoon plus 1½ teaspoons white vinegar in a 2-cup glass measuring cup and let stand at room temperature for 10 to 15 minutes.

# 1.

Mix the milk and cream of tartar in a large bowl. Let stand at room temperature for 15 minutes. The milk should start to curdle. Stir well before using.

# 2.

Refrigerate in an airtight container up to 1 week.

**MAKES ABOUT 1¼ CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES**

# BUTTERMILK

METHOD 2

**INGREDIENTS**

**2 cups nonfat milk**

**6 tablespoons cultured buttermilk**

Here’s a low-fat buttermilk that can be used in all baking recipes that call for buttermilk. This recipe can be doubled easily for a larger batch.

# 1.

Heat the milk in a medium saucepan until it’s slightly warm and bubbles appear around the edges. Do not allow the milk to come to a boil. Stir in the buttermilk, cover loosely, and allow the milk to stand at least 12 hours or overnight at room temperature.

# 2.

Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks. Stir well before using.

**MAKES ABOUT 2½ CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES**

# BUTTERMILK POT CHEESE

**INGREDIENTS**

**8 cups (2 quarts) homemade buttermilk**

½ **teaspoon salt** (optional)

Similar in consistency to yogurt cheese, this buttermilk cheese makes an excellent base for lower-calorie cheesecakes, dips, and spreads.

# 1.

Heat buttermilk slowly to 200°F in a large pot. Check temperature with a thermometer. Do not allow it to come to a boil. Remove from heat, cover, and let stand at room temperature for 2 hours or until curd has separated from the whey.

**MAKES ABOUT 1 POUND**
**PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES**

# 2.

Line a large strainer or colander with a double layer of butter muslin and set over a large bowl. Pour the cooled buttermilk through the butter muslin and let drain until no more whey drips from the bottom, about 1 hour. For a dryer curd, refrigerate and let drain for 5 to 6 hours.

# 3.

Remove curds from the muslin and transfer to a medium bowl. Mix in salt if desired. Cover and refrigerate up to 1 week.

# CRÈME FRAÎCHE

**Crème fraîche, which translates from French into "fresh cream,"** is often considered the French version of sour cream, but it's quite different. It's made from 30 to 40 percent butterfat cream that has been left out to mature and sour naturally without the addition of bacteria starters or cultures. It has a nutty and mild tangy flavor, with a smooth, rich, custardlike texture. When it's first made, the flavor is slightly sour and the texture is smooth — almost pourable. As it matures, the flavor becomes stronger and the texture thickens, becoming almost solid.

Crème fraîche originated before the days of pasteurization, when refrigeration and fast transportation weren't available. The cream collected bacteria and fermented before it was able to make its way from the French dairy farms to the markets. The French developed a taste for it and still enjoy the flavor today.

Like all raw creams, crème fraîche contains lactic acid and other ferments. These naturally occurring ferments, if allowed to grow properly, work as thickening agents and also help preserve the cream. This process is disrupted in dairy products made in the United States because they're pasteurized, which kills the natural ferments and bacteria, but any fresh cream, if left alone at room temperature, will go through this fermenting process.

All crème fraîche has an average of 30 percent butterfat, and some can be as high as 60 percent. Heavy cream in this country comes in at about 35 percent, but the taste is not at all similar to the French type. Because crème fraîche is a matured cream, it's often referred to as a soured cream, but don't confuse it with sour cream; they're different products.

# HOMEMADE CRÈME FRAÎCHE

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 to 2 tablespoons cultured buttermilk**

**2 cups (1 pint) heavy cream**

This is a home version that comes close to the real French thing. Start with organic cream, if possible, to avoid additives. Do not use ultrapasteurized cream.

# 1.

Combine the buttermilk and cream in a medium saucepan and heat only to tepid (not more than 85°F). Check temperature with a thermometer. Pour mixture into a clean pint jar. Cover partially and let stand at room temperature (between 65 and 75°F) for 8 to 24 hours or until thickened.

# 2.

Stir and refrigerate at least 24 hours before using. The cream will continue to thicken and develop flavor in the refrigerator. It will keep about 2 weeks.

**MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES**

# USING CRÈME FRAÎCHE

**Here are some quick and delicious ways to use crème fraîche in your everyday cooking:**

## HERBED CREAM SAUCE

This is an extremely simple way to use crème fraîche in a no-cook sauce. Simply blend ½ cup of crème fraîche with 1½ teaspoons chopped fresh herbs such as chives, tarragon, basil, or thyme, and ¼ teaspoon lemon juice. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve it with fish, poultry, or vegetables.

## CREAMY PAN SAUCE

When you're making a deglazed pan sauce after pan-frying poultry or beef, stir in a generous tablespoon of crème fraîche just before serving.

## CREAM SOUP

For an extra-rich cream soup, try reducing the cream in the recipe by ¼ cup and substituting crème fraîche.

## FRESH FRUIT

Crème fraîche makes a great topping for fresh berries or cut-up fruit such as peaches, plums, or pears. You can sweeten the crème fraîche if you prefer by adding 1 teaspoon of honey and ½ teaspoon vanilla extract to about ½ cup crème fraîche.

## PLAIN

Crème fraîche can be drizzled over grilled vegetables, steamed or baked potatoes, poached or scrambled eggs, salads, or grilled fish, especially salmon.

# QUARK

**Quark is a soft, unripened German cheese made from buttermilk** that has a texture and flavor similar to sour cream. Quark can be used as a sour cream–substitute to top baked potatoes and as an ingredient in a variety of dishes, including cheesecakes, dips, salads, and sauces.

# BUTTERMILK QUARK

**INGREDIENTS**

**8 cups (2 quarts) homemade buttermilk**

If the quark is too thick and grainy, it can be thinned and smoothed by stirring in a little milk. You can use the whey from the quark, flavored with fruit juice, as a beverage or use it in baking. Store it in the refrigerator and use within 2 days.

# 1.

Preheat the oven to 150°F. Pour the buttermilk into a large ovenproof baking dish or Dutch oven with lid. Cover and place in the oven 8 to 12 hours.

# 2.

Line a colander with a double layer of butter muslin and set over a large bowl. Pour the buttermilk into the cloth and cover with the ends of the butter muslin. Let buttermilk drain at room temperature for about 6 hours (after about 1 hour, weight the buttermilk by placing a plate on top to encourage the whey to drip through the muslin).

**MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP**
**PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES**

# 3.

The curds in the cloth are the cheese (quark). Transfer to a medium bowl and cover and store the quark for 1 week in the refrigerator.

## BUTTERMILK LORE

- Irish folklore claims a glass of buttermilk will cure a hangover, and, when heated with a clove of garlic, buttermilk was sure to cure any variety of ailments.

- According to American folklore, drinking buttermilk will immunize against poison oak and ivy.
- Many pioneer women used buttermilk as a facial wash, believing the flecks of butter resulted in a smooth and creamy complexion.

# SOUR CREAM

**Traditionally, sour cream was made by letting fresh cream sour naturally** at room temperature. Naturally occurring bacteria in the cream acts as a thickener and creates a tangy flavor in the cream. If you left out today's processed cream overnight, however, all you would get is spoiled cream.

Today, commercially made sour cream is produced by inoculating a pasteurized cream with a pure mixture of bacteria. Once the product has thickened, it's pasteurized again to kill off the bacteria. Commercial sour cream has no natural bacteria, which is why you can't use it as a starter for your homemade version. Adding some buttermilk to pasteurized cream will thicken the cream to a custardlike consistency and give it a recognizably piquant flavor.

# HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM

METHOD 1

**INGREDIENTS**

**2 cups (1 pint) light cream,** at room temperature

**2 tablespoons cultured buttermilk,** at room temperature

It’s easy to make your own sour cream with some light cream and buttermilk, and the results are worth it. Homemade sour cream can be kept in the refrigerator an entire month, and it will get thicker and thicker and better and better during that time. Use homemade sour cream in any recipe calling for sour cream. For the best results, bring the cream and buttermilk to room temperature by letting them sit on the counter for 1 to 2 hours before you begin.

**MAKES ABOUT 2 CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 10 MINUTES**

If the ingredients are too cold, the sour cream will take much longer to thicken or may not thicken properly.

# 1.

Place the cream in a medium bowl or a glass-lined thermos.

# 2.

Stir in the buttermilk and cover the mixture tightly with plastic wrap (or cover the thermos).

# 3.

Leave the mixture in a warm place for 24 hours, until thickened to a custardlike consistency. Stir to blend, and refrigerate at least 24 hours before using. The sour cream may continue to thicken in the refrigerator.

# HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM

METHOD 2

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 cup heavy cream**

**1½ cups whole milk**
**½ cup cultured buttermilk**

In this recipe, the ingredients are first brought to room temperature by warming them over hot water. You can also leave the products at room temperature for about an hour, however, and achieve the same results. This method produces a thicker, richer sour cream than method 1 because it uses heavy cream and whole milk, which have a combined higher fat content than light cream.

**MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES**

# 1.

Mix the cream, milk, and buttermilk in a medium bowl set over warm water (105 to 115°F), stirring until the temperature of the mixture reaches 68 to 70°F, about 15 minutes. Check with a thermometer. Remove the bowl from the water, cover, and let mixture stand at room temperature for 12 to 24 hours or until it has a custardlike consistency and is thick enough to cling firmly to a spoon. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use. It will keep up to 4 weeks.

**TIPS AND HINTS ON USING SOUR CREAM**

- Sour cream makes a great base for dips, dressings, spreads, and sauces. Used as is, it is a tempering condiment for spicy foods.
- Never heat sour cream to the boiling point because it will curdle immediately. The best way to add sour cream to a hot liquid is to remove the liquid from the heat source and add the cream slowly while stirring gently.

- Avoid using sour cream in dishes with a lot of salt or lemon; the salt and lemon may cause the cream to curdle.
- Dishes made with sour cream do not freeze well.

# PART TWO
# SOFT, UNRIPENED CHEESES

CREAM CHEESE

COTTAGE CHEESE

RICOTTA

GOAT CHEESE

MOZZARELLA

MASCARPONE

The easiest cheeses to make at home are soft cheeses. They require no pressing, aging, or special humidity and temperature control. They do not take a lot of time in actual preparation, require little attention, and most of the equipment needed you probably already have — now that’s easy. Plus, because soft, unripened cheese has the highest moisture content, it has the least fat and the fewest calories among products in the cheese family.

**What distinguishes soft cheese** is the creamy texture and spreadable consistency of most of them. Fresh cheeses also take well to flavorings: Fresh herbs, spices, vanilla, honey, and marmalade are all tasty additions. The at-home process of making fresh cheese is generally the same, regardless of the type of cheese you're making. Once you understand the basic process, the different types of cheese you can make are only variations.

All fresh cheese begins with milk that is heated on the stove to a desired temperature (according to a specific recipe). A starter is then added to produce acid that causes the milk to coagulate. The starter also adds flavor. Starters can vary from simple items such as vinegar and lemon juice to purchased starters with bacteria cultures. You can also add animal rennet, which clots the milk into curds and allows it to separate from the whey. Curds will usually take about 30 minutes to form, again depending on a specific recipe. Some fresh cheese recipes call for curds to continue to be heated.

Once curds are formed, they're cut into smaller pieces; this helps to express the whey further. Next, the curds are drained. At this point, they can be flavored and pressed into molds as well.

The secrets to making fresh cheese at home are patience and experimentation. The cheese you make may not taste the way you would like it to the first time. Maybe it's the quality of the ingredients you used or the handling, but don't despair. The process is simple, and it won't take long before you'll be enjoying successful results. Because home cheese making does require some degree of experimentation, it's a good idea to keep notes detailing each process so you will have something to refer back to the next time around.

# CREAM CHEESE

**Fresh, homemade cream cheese is a simple cheese to make at home,** and its flavor is incomparably better than store-bought versions. The entire cheese-making process will take two days, but not much of that is actual work, and the finished product is well worth the effort. Fresh cream cheese will not look like store-bought cheese. It will be soft and appear slightly curdled, but it smooths once it is warmed to room temperature and stirred.

Once upon a time, cream cheese made no demands. You simply reached for the block in your refrigerator to spread on a toasted bagel or, if you were feeling somewhat adventurous, you may have whipped up a luscious cheesecake. But those days are gone as we discover the infinite number of uses for this soft, mild-tasting cheese. Its creamy texture adds richness and flavor to dips, spreads, pastries, cakes, frostings, cookies, pies, and puddings, and it enhances a variety of savory dishes too, including soups, sauces, chicken entrées, Mexican foods, and pasta dishes.

It’s no wonder that cream cheese is one of America’s most widely consumed cheeses, ranking third as our favorite. (Cheddar and mozzarella are rated number one and two, respectively.) Americans consumed 2.5 pounds per person in 2004, which is nearly 4 times the 1970 level. And sales of this soft, creamy cheese grow steadily each year.

Perhaps it’s the comforting, creamy flavor that cream cheese imparts to dishes that wins over taste buds so quickly. Or maybe it’s the flaky, tender texture it lends to pastries and baked goods. Whatever its allure, the fresh homemade version is even better!

# HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE

**INGREDIENTS**

**6 cups (1½ quarts) whole milk**

**4 cups (2 pints) heavy cream**
**1 cup plain cultured yogurt**
**1 rennet tablet**
**¼ cup cool water** (55 to 60°F)
**Salt**

This method for making cream cheese is very easy and relatively quick and gives you creamy, rich-tasting results.

# 1.

Combine milk, cream, and yogurt in a large pot and stir well. Warm to 100°F over low heat. Check temperature with thermometer. Remove pan from heat.

**MAKES ABOUT 1½ POUNDS**
**PREP TIME: 40 MINUTES**

# 2.

Dissolve rennet tablet in the water in a small bowl. Add to warmed milk mixture, and stir thoroughly for 3 minutes. Cover and let stand for 1 to 1½ hours or until curds are firm and break away from the sides of the pan. The temperature should drop no lower than 85°F. If the temperature does drop below 85°F, slowly reheat to correct temperature.

# 3.

Cut curds into 2-inch cubes. Let stand 15 minutes undisturbed. Line a colander with a double layer of butter muslin. Pour or, using a perforated shallow ladle, spoon the mixture into a lined strainer. Fold the excess cloth over the curds and set the colander in a large bowl. Cover the bowl with plastic wrap and refrigerate to drain 8 hours or overnight.

## ABOUT CREAM CHEESE

According to the food manufacturer Kraft and their Web site, www.kraft.com, cream cheese originated in the United States in 1872 when a dairyman in Chester, New York, developed a rich-tasting fresh cheese made from cream as well as whole milk. Then in 1880, New York cheese distributor A. L. Reynolds began distributing cream cheese wrapped in tinfoil wrappers, calling it Philadelphia Brand.

But why did he call it Philadelphia? Reynolds adopted the name "Philadelphia Brand Cream Cheese" for the product because, at that time, top-quality food products often originated in or were associated with the city and were often referred to as being "Philadelphia quality."

# 4.

Transfer the drained cheese to a clean bowl, season to taste with salt, and stir well. The cheese is ready to be used in flavored cheese spreads or for cooking.

Store the cheese in an airtight container and refrigerate up to 2 weeks.

### MOLDING CREAM CHEESE

Spoon the cheese into small molds and refrigerate until firm. Unmold the cheeses, wrap in plastic wrap, and refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

# COTTAGE CHEESE

**Commercial cottage cheese is made from cow's milk** and has a mild flavor and moist texture, with large or small curds. The acidity of homemade cottage cheese may vary with the curd size. Large-curd cottage cheese tends to be more acidic because it uses rennet for coagulation. The curd size of commercial cottage cheese is simply a matter of the processing. "Farmer's cheese" and "pot cheese" are names given to fresh cheeses that are similar to cottage cheese; they are a little firmer and drier.

Cottage cheese is equally good made with whole, low-fat, and nonfat milk, and it's extremely versatile. It goes well with fresh vegetables or condiments, such as peppers, olives, or pimientos, as well as with fruits, such as pineapple, peaches, or berries. Low-fat cottage cheese can be used to replace higher-fat cream cheese in desserts such as cheesecake and pastry fillings, and it's good in savory baked dishes such as lasagna.

# LARGE-CURD COTTAGE CHEESE

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 gallon milk, whole, low-fat, or nonfat**
**¼ teaspoon liquid rennet**
**2 tablespoons water**
**¼ cup cultured buttermilk**
**1 to 2 teaspoons salt**

I give a recipe for large-curd cottage cheese because it's easier to make than small-curd cottage cheese, which takes about 30 hours. To make creamed cottage cheese, stir a little heavy cream or half-and-half into large-curd cottage cheese just before serving.

# 1.

Pour the milk into a large, heavy-bottomed pot and heat over low heat to 95°F. Check temperature with a thermometer.

**MAKES ABOUT 4 CUPS**
**PREP TIME: 25 MINUTES**

# 2.

Dissolve the rennet in the water in a small cup. Stir the dissolved rennet into the milk for 30 seconds. Stir in the buttermilk. Remove from heat, cover, and let stand 30 minutes to 1 hour or until solid curds form.

# 3.

Cut curds into 1-inch pieces. Heat the curds with the whey over low heat to 110°F, stirring gently to bring curds from the bottom to the top (stir for the first 5 minutes, then every 5 minutes). It will take about 30 minutes for the curds to reach 110°F.

# 4.

Pour or ladle the curds into a colander lined with a double layer of butter muslin. Let the whey drain about 5 minutes, then gather together the edges of the muslin and rinse the cheese under cold water, squeezing while rinsing.

# 5.

Squeeze the cheese dry, then transfer to a medium bowl and add 1 to 2 teaspoons of salt to taste. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use or up to 2 days.

# FARMER’S CHEESE

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 gallon whole milk**
**1 cup plain yogurt**
**¼ teaspoon liquid rennet**
**¼ cup cool water** (55 to 60°F)
**1 to 2 teaspoons salt**

This cheese will take the shape of any mold into which it’s pressed. Serve it unmolded with crackers and fresh fruit, such as sliced apples and pears or fresh strawberries.

# 1.

Pour the milk and yogurt into a large pot. Heat over low heat, stirring, until the temperature of the mixture reaches 95°F. Check temperature with a thermometer.

**MAKES ABOUT 1 POUND**
**PREP TIME: 50 MINUTES**

# 2.

Dissolve the rennet in the water in a small cup. Stir the dissolved rennet into the milk for 30 seconds. Remove from heat, cover, and let stand 30 minutes to 1 hour or until solid curds form.

# 3.

Cut the curds into 1-inch pieces. Heat them with the whey over low heat to 120°F, stirring gently to bring curds from the bottom to the top (stir for the first 5 minutes, then every 5 minutes after that). It will take about 30 minutes for the curds to reach 110°F.

# 4.

Pour or ladle the curds into a colander lined with a double layer of butter muslin. Let the whey drain for 1 hour or until it stops dripping from the cloth.

# 5.

Transfer the cheese to a medium bowl and add 1 to 2 teaspoons of salt to taste, stirring well.

# 6.

Line two cheese molds with a double layer of butter muslin. Fill the molds with the cheese, fold the butter muslin over the top, and place about 2 pounds of weight on top. Press for 4 hours in the refrigerator. Remove cheese from molds and remove cloth carefully. Use right away or cover and refrigerate up to 1 week.

# RICOTTA

**It is simple enough to buy a carton of ricotta cheese** off the grocery store's shelf, but making fresh ricotta at home is remarkably easy, and the creamy, slightly sweet homemade version is so much better than the rubbery mass you find at the supermarket. Plus, all you need are three everyday ingredients and about an hour.

Ricotta is traditionally made from the whey left over from making buffalo mozzarella, sheep's milk pecorino, and so forth. Actually, it's not a cheese but creamy curds. The curds are literally cooked twice, hence the name "ricotta," which means "recooked" in Italian. The leftover hot whey of milk used for cheese making has milk solids and a protein called albumin, which solidifies under high heat. When the whey is reheated (recooked) the solid milk parts are skimmed off to drain, and this is called ricotta cheese.

But delicious fresh ricotta can also be made by using readily available cow's milk — or a blend of cow and goat's milk. This ricotta tastes and smells like the milk it is made from, so use the best and freshest dairy you can find. You can control the consistency of your cheese by the length of time you drain it. For a drier ricotta, drain for 15 minutes or more; for a ricotta that's a bit creamier, drain for less than 15 minutes.

The cheese is delicious eaten plain or use it for many sweet and savory dishes. You can use your homemade ricotta in almost any recipe that calls for cottage cheese. It can be used instead of cream cheese to make cheesecake. You can also stir in some herbs and eat the mixture on crackers.

Ricotta salata is a Sicilian specialty made from drained and dried ricotta. It's used in salads, grated over pasta, and stuffed into some fritters.

# HOMEMADE RICOTTA

METHOD 1

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 gallon whole milk**

**4 cups (1 quart) cultured buttermilk**
**Salt**

I found that this method works best with whole milk. The whey, or creamy yellow liquid that separates from the curds, can be used in any recipe calling for sour milk or buttermilk or in the Twisted Whey-Wheat Rolls on page 174.

**MAKES ABOUT 1 POUND (2 CUPS)**
**PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES**

# 1.

Combine the milk and buttermilk in a large, heavy-bottomed pot and heat it until it reaches 180°F. Check with a thermometer, stirring occasionally. Once it has reached 180°F, remove the pot from heat and let it sit for 30 minutes to allow the curds to form. Do not stir the milk mixture or the ricotta will have a grainy, thin texture.

# 2.

Line a colander with a double layer of butter muslin. Pour or ladle the curds into the colander carefully and let drain for 1 to 2 hours, depending on how dry you want your ricotta.

# 3.

When the ricotta has drained, transfer it to a bowl, break it up, and stir. Add salt to taste. Use right away, or refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week.

# HOMEMADE RICOTTA

METHOD 2

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 gallon whole milk**

**⅓ cup white vinegar**

**1 teaspoon salt**

This method takes a little longer for the curds to form, and the resulting product has a slightly tangy flavor due to the vinegar. Its creamy texture and great taste will make you want to eat it right out of the bowl.

# 1.

Heat the milk in a large, heavy-bottomed pot until it reaches 185°F. Check with a thermometer. Remove from heat, add the vinegar and salt, and stir gently just to mix. Cover the pot and let sit for 2 hours to allow the curds to fully develop. Do not stir, or the ricotta will have a grainy texture.

**MAKES ABOUT ¾ POUND (1½ CUPS)**
**PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES**

# 2.

Line a colander with a double layer of butter muslin. Pour or ladle the mixture into the colander carefully and let the cheese drain for 1 to 2 hours, depending on how dry you want your ricotta.

# 3.

When the ricotta has drained, transfer it to a bowl, break it up, and stir. Store the ricotta in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

## RICOTTA SERVING IDEAS

- Use fresh ricotta as a topping for pancakes or French toast; drizzle the ricotta with pure maple syrup or any fruit syrup.
- Spread lightly sweetened ricotta on toasted slices of bread or English muffin halves and dust with cinnamon-sugar.
- Sweeten ricotta with honey and a little vanilla extract and serve with fresh berries or cut-up fruit.
- Use an electric mixer to whip ricotta with unsweetened cocoa powder and confectioners' sugar until creamy. Serve as you would pudding.

# GOAT CHEESE

**The only thing that differentiates goat cheese from other cheeses** is the milk used to make it: goat's milk. I was a fan of goat cheese from the first time I tasted it. The distinctive tangy flavor and smooth, creamy texture that the milk imparts to the cheese is something you either love or don't love. But apparently, a lot of people love this cheese: Just visit the dairy department of a local supermarket or go to a farmers' market and you'll notice Americans have more choices of imported, domestic, and handcrafted goat cheese now than ever before.

Making goat cheese at home is as easy as making any other soft, unripened cheese. Look for goat's milk at natural food stores, farmers' markets, and large supermarkets. You can use the milk to make wonderful mozzarella, ricotta, and yogurt. Fresh goat cheese is made in a variety of shapes and sizes, such as small disks that are covered with leaves or logs coated with fresh herbs or spices.

# HOMEMADE GOAT CHEESE

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 gallon whole goat’s milk**

**1 cup cider vinegar**

Fresh goat cheese — sometimes called chèvre, which is French for goat — ranges in texture from creamy to semifirm. The flavor works especially well with acidic accompaniments, such as tomatoes or strawberries.

# 1.

Pour the milk in a large, heavy-bottomed pot and heat gradually over medium-low heat until it reaches a temperature of 175 to 180°F. Check the temperature with a thermometer. It’s important to heat gradually and to stir the milk frequently to prevent scorching (and a slightly burned taste).

**MAKES ABOUT 1 POUND**
**PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES**

# 2.

Hold the temperature at 175 to 180°F for about 10 minutes. Reduce the heat, if necessary. (Once milk reaches high temperatures, it can gain heat surprisingly quickly.) Stir in the vinegar slowly until curds begin to form.

# 3.

Remove the pot from heat. Pour or ladle the curds into a butter muslin–lined colander. Tie the corners of the cloth into a knot, forming a bag from which to drain off the whey. Slide a long-handled spoon beneath the knot and hang the bag inside the empty pot to drain for 2 to 5 hours or until desired consistency.

# 4.

Transfer the cheese from the muslin to a bowl and use right away or cover and

refrigerate up to 2 days.

## GOAT'S MILK LEGEND

Legend has it that Cleopatra bathed in goat's milk to keep her skin silky smooth, and pharaohs had goat's milk and cheese placed in their burial chambers for the afterlife.

# HERBED GOAT CHEESE

**INGREDIENTS**

**2 cups whole goat's milk**

**2 cups (1 pint) heavy cream**
**½ cup plain yogurt** with live cultures
**¼ cup chopped fresh basil**
**1 sprig fresh parsley**
**1 sprig fresh thyme**
**½ teaspoon liquid rennet**
**¼ cup cool water** (55 to 60°F)
**½ teaspoon salt**

This cheese is made with a combination of goat's milk and cow's milk. The practice of blending these milks is common, especially in European countries such as France and Greece. After the cheese has been unmolded, it can be rolled in coarsely cracked peppercorns or dried herbs if desired.

**MAKES ABOUT ½ POUND**
**PREP TIME: 40 MINUTES**

# 1.

Pour the milk and cream into a large pot. Stir in the yogurt, basil, parsley, and thyme, and cook over low heat for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

# 2.

Pour the mixture through a strainer; discard the herbs and return the milk mixture to the pot. Bring the mixture to 100°F. Check the temperature with a thermometer.

# 3.

In a small cup, dissolve the rennet in the water. Add this mixture to the milk and stir for 30 seconds. Remove the pot from heat, cover, and let stand for 2 hours

longer to form curds.

# 4.

Cut the curds into 1-inch cubes and gently stir. Pour or spoon the curds carefully into a butter muslin–lined colander set over a large bowl and let drain about 1 hour. Turn the cheese out into a medium bowl and stir in the salt.

# 5.

Line 1-cup cheese molds with butter muslin. Fill molds with cheese, fold cloth over top, and place a weight on each, such as a plate and a can (a total of about 2 pounds). Refrigerate under the weight overnight or up to 2 days.

# 6.

To serve, unmold cheese and remove butter muslin. Cheese will keep up to 1 week, tightly wrapped and refrigerated.

# GOAT’S MILK FETA CHEESE

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 gallon goat’s milk**

**¼ cup cultured buttermilk**
**½ teaspoon liquid rennet**
**¼ cup cool water** (55 to 60°F)
**Coarse salt**

Feta is best known for its salty, tangy flavor and versatility. Once you’ve tasted freshly made feta, you might want to have it on hand all the time to add to salads and Greek-style dishes. Use the cheese right away or refrigerate, covered in salted water, up to 4 weeks.

# 1.

Warm the milk to 88°F over low heat in a large, heavy-bottomed pot. Check the temperature with a thermometer. Stir in the buttermilk. Cover and let stand for 1 hour.

**MAKES ABOUT 1 POUND**
**PREP TIME: 40 MINUTES**

# 2.

In a small cup, dissolve the rennet in the water. Add this mixture to the milk and stir for 30 seconds. Remove the pot from the heat, cover, and let stand for 1 hour longer to coagulate.

# 3.

Using a knife, cut the curds into 1-inch cubes. Stir gently for 15 minutes, keeping the curds at 88°F.

# 4.

Pour the curds carefully into a butter muslin-lined colander, tie together the ends of the muslin to make a bag, and hang in a cool room or in the refrigerator to drain for 4 to 6 hours.

# 5.

Remove the cheese from the muslin, slice the cheese ball in half, and lay the slabs of cheese in a dish that can be covered. Sprinkle all the surfaces with coarse salt, cover, and allow to set at room temperature for 24 hours. After 24 hours, salt all the surfaces again and let the cheese rest for 2 hours.

# 6.

Place the cheese in a covered dish and refrigerate up

# MOZZARELLA

**For most of us, mozzarella means the kind found in the grocery store** — the plastic-sealed chunks with a rubbery consistency. That version doesn't compare to handmade fresh mozzarella. The real thing is tender with a sweet, mellow flavor, and it's so fresh that it drips milk when it's cut.

Generally speaking, making mozzarella is a simple process: Whole or skim milk is coagulated, usually with an acid culture or rennet. The liquid whey is drained from the curds, which are salted. What makes mozzarella different from other fresh cheeses is that the curds are stretched, which gives the cheese its smooth, tight texture.

Mozzarella was made originally with water buffalo milk in the southern Italian region of Campania. Buffalo-milk mozzarella is creamier than that made with cow's milk. It has a high butterfat content, about 50 percent, compared to 45 percent for whole cow's milk and 30 to 45 percent for part skim.

Fresh mozzarella can be made into several shapes and varieties: salted and unsalted; golf ball–size bocconcini; and braided, smoked, and marinated. My own favorite way of enjoying fresh mozzarella is to eat a slice with a hunk of crusty bread topped with a sliced garden-fresh tomato. Beyond just for eating as is, mozzarella is a wonderful melting cheese. In Italian classics such as eggplant parmigiana and chicken parmigiana it forms a soft, glazed topping.

## MOZZARELLA TIP

Fresh mozzarella is delicious, but it's difficult to grate. Here's the solution: Freeze it first. Wrap fresh mozzarella in plastic wrap and freeze for at least 20 minutes. Unwrap the cheese and grate it. Use right away.

# HOMEMADE MOZZARELLA

### INGREDIENTS

**2 gallons whole or low-fat milk** (cow's or goat's milk)
**2½ teaspoons citric acid powder** (see Note)
**½ teaspoon liquid rennet**
**¼ cup cool water** (55 to 60°F)
**8 cups water**
**¼ cup salt**

The part of making your own mozzarella that's the most fun is the stretching process. It's almost magical to watch the curds become a smooth, elastic mass. And nothing beats its fresh, sweet flavor.

> ***Note:*** Citric acid powder is available at cheese-making supply houses (see Sources on page 209).

**MAKES ABOUT 2 POUNDS**
**PREP TIME: 1 HOUR**

# 1.

Pour the milk into a large, heavy-bottomed pot and stir in the citric acid, stirring for 2 minutes. Bring the milk to 88°F. (It doesn't matter whether you stir.) Check the temperature with a thermometer. Remove the pot from heat.

# 2.

In a small cup, dissolve the rennet in the cool water. Add this mixture to the milk and stir for 30 seconds. Cover the pot and let stand for 15 minutes.

# 3.

Using a knife (preferably a curd knife), cut the curds into 1-inch cubes and then let stand for another 5 minutes.

# 4.

Heat the curds over low heat, stirring gently to keep them separated. The curds will begin to shrink as the whey begins to separate from them. Slowly heat the curds to 108°F, stirring often, about 15 minutes. Check the temperature with a thermometer. Turn off the heat and continue to stir every few minutes for 20 minutes longer.

# 5.

Meanwhile, combine the 8 cups of water and salt in a pot and bring to 180°F.

# 6.

Spoon the curds into a colander lined with a double layer of butter muslin and let drain about 15 minutes.

# 7.

Cut the curds into 1-inch cubes and place in a large bowl. Pour the hot water over the curds; the water should cover them. (The hot water will warm the cheese so it begins to melt and can be stretched.)

# 8.

Using one or two wooden spoons or your hands, begin to stretch the cheese in an upward fashion, like you are stretching taffy. Stretch the cheese for about 10 minutes or until it begins to get stringy and shiny.

# 9.

Remove the cheese from the water. On a cutting board, continue to knead the cheese as you would bread, for about 5 minutes, to remove the excess water. The mozzarella can be served right way or can be refrigerated, covered in water, for up to 3 days. Change the water after a day or two.

# MICROWAVE MOZZARELLA

**INGREDIENTS**

**1 gallon whole or low-fat milk**
**2 teaspoons citric acid powder** (see Note)
**¼ teaspoon liquid rennet**
**¼ cup cool water** (55 to 60°F)

It may be hard to believe, but with this easy method you can make fresh mozzarella in about 30 minutes — and it tastes great.

> ***Note:*** Citric acid powder is available at cheese-making supply houses (see Sources on page 209).

# 1.

Pour the milk into a large, heavy-bottomed pot and add the citric acid, stirring for 2 minutes. Bring the milk to 105°F. (It doesn't matter whether you stir.) Check the temperature with a thermometer. Remove the pot from heat.

**MAKES ABOUT 1 POUND**
**PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES**

# 2.

In a small cup, dissolve the rennet in the water. Add this mixture to the milk and stir for 30 seconds. Cover the pot and let stand for 15 minutes.

# 3.

Using a wide, shallow ladle, scoop the curds carefully into a microwave-safe bowl and pour off and press out the excess liquid.

# 4.

Microwave for 1 minute on high. Pour off excess liquid, being careful because it will be very hot. Turn curd and microwave on high for 30 seconds longer. Remove cheese from microwave. Drain off excess whey. Repeat microwave process, draining and pressing off the excess whey.

# 5.

Using a wooden spoon, stir and stretch the cheese for about 10 minutes or until it’s stringy and shiny. If the mozzarella cools too much, it will become hard to stretch. If this happens, reheat the cheese for 30-second intervals until it becomes pliable again. The mozzarella can be served right way or refrigerated, covered in water, for up to 3 days. Change the water after a day or two.

# MASCARPONE

**Mascarpone is a fresh, soft cow's milk cheese** that tastes like a cross between cream cheese and whipped cream. Using heavy cream with a butterfat content of 30 to 46 percent gives mascarpone its richness. Mascarpone has a compact, dense texture, but the cheese is also very smooth and spreadable.

The flavor of mascarpone is unique — mildly sweet and refreshing. It is often mixed with cocoa, coffee, liqueurs, or fruit to use as a spread or an accompaniment to fruit, but mascarpone is probably best known for its role in the filling for the popular Italian dessert tiramisu.

# MASCARPONE

**INGREDIENTS**

**4 cups (2 pints) heavy cream**

**1 tablespoon white wine vinegar**

You can make a double boiler yourself for this recipe by using a stainless steel bowl and a large saucepan. Just be sure that the bowl doesn't touch the bottom of the pan that holds it and that there's enough room to add water to the pan.

# 1.

Pour the cream into the top of a large double boiler and slowly heat to 190°F, stirring occasionally. Check the temperature with a thermometer.

# 2.

Stir in the vinegar, and continue to stir until the cream begins to curdle. Remove the pan from the water, cover, and let stand about 15 minutes or until the curds begin to firm.

**MAKES ABOUT 1 POUND**
**PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES**

# 3.

Pour or ladle the curds into a butter muslin–lined strainer set over a large bowl. Let the curds cool completely, then cover and refrigerate for 24 hours to continue draining and to firm.

# 4.

Discard the liquid and transfer the mascarpone to an airtight container. Refrigerate for up to 3 days. Stir well before using.

# FRESH CHEESE TROUBLESHOOTING

## IF YOUR CURD IS TOO SOFT AND WEAK …

- Be sure that you haven't used ultra-pasteurized milk. Ultra-pasteurized milk has been heated to 191°F for 1 minute to kill all organisms. The high heat also damages the protein structure of the milk, which will affect curd formation.

## IF YOUR MILK DOESN'T COAGULATE INTO A SOFT CURD …

- You may have added too little rennet. For the next batch, increase the amount of rennet.
- The rennet may have been diluted in very warm water, which could have weakened or killed it. Be sure to dilute it in cool (55 to 60°F) water.
- The rennet may not be of good quality. Buy rennet from a reputable source.

## IF YOUR MILK COAGULATES IMMEDIATELY …

- The milk may have been too acidic. One way to remedy this is to use less starter. Also, once the starter has been added, incubate the milk at a slightly lower temperature.

## PART THREE
# RECIPES FROM THE HOME CREAMERY

# COFFEE AND…

While some might choose to stick with routine morning menus, breakfast doesn't have to include the same old dishes. You can add some variety to your table with delicacies made with fresh cheese and dairy products, such as buttermilk and sour cream. The exciting and tasty creations that result will get you started in the morning.

Lemon Scones
The Best Buttermilk Pancakes
Pumpkin Spice Muffins
Cheese Blintzes
Spice-Swirled Coffee Cake
Apple Coffee Cake with Caramel Glaze
Cornmeal Waffles with Peaches and Mascarpone Topping
Vanilla Waffles

Banana-Blueberry Muffins
Fresh Fruit Smoothie

# LEMON SCONES

**These biscuits with a British background are flavored with fresh lemon. Buttermilk gives them a remarkably moist and tender texture. You can also add golden raisins, dried cranberries, or dried cherries to the dough.**

⅔ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well

**1** egg

**1** tablespoon finely grated lemon zest

**2** cups unbleached all-purpose flour

¼ cup firmly packed light brown sugar

**1** tablespoon baking powder

¼ teaspoon salt

**4** tablespoons cold **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, cut into small pieces

**1.** Preheat oven to 375°F.

**2.** Whisk together the buttermilk, egg, and lemon zest in a small bowl. Whisk together the flour, brown sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. Work in the butter with your hands, a pastry blender, or two knives until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add the buttermilk mixture, stirring with a fork just until a dough forms; do not overmix.

**3.** On a lightly floured surface, knead the dough 8 to 10 times or just until it comes together. Divide the dough in half and form each piece into a 6-inch disk that's about ½ inch thick. Transfer the disks to an ungreased baking sheet. Cut each into 6 wedges.

**4.** Bake for about 25 minutes or until golden brown. Cool on a wire rack. Separate the wedges and serve warm.

**MAKES 12**

# THE BEST BUTTERMILK PANCAKES

**Homemade buttermilk makes these delicious pancakes especially light and moist; the texture is a cross between a crêpe and a pancake. Avoid overmixing the batter (it's okay if there are lumps) to ensure that the pancakes will be airy.**

**2** cups unbleached all-purpose flour

**2** tablespoons sugar

**2** teaspoons baking powder

½ teaspoon salt

**2** cups **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well

½ cup milk

**2** eggs

**1** teaspoon pure vanilla extract

¼ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, melted

**1.** Whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, and salt in a large bowl. Whisk the buttermilk, milk, eggs, and vanilla in another large bowl. Add the buttermilk mixture to the dry ingredients. Stir until the batter is just blended but still lumpy; do not overmix.

**2.** Spread ½ tablespoon of the melted butter on a griddle over medium heat. Pour the batter by ⅓ cupfuls onto the hot griddle, spacing 2 inches apart. Cook until bubbles break on surface, about 3 minutes. Turn pancakes over. Cook until bottoms are golden, 3 minutes. Transfer to plates. Repeat with remaining batter, adding butter to skillet as needed.

**MAKES ABOUT 16**

# PUMPKIN SPICE MUFFINS

**Homemade buttermilk makes these muffins tender and rich. Serve them warm from the oven or at room temperature as an inviting breakfast or for a treat with midmorning coffee or afternoon tea. Do not use pumpkin pie filling, which has spices and other ingredients mixed into the pumpkin. It will add off-flavors to the muffins. Be sure to use solid-pack pumpkin.**

¾ cup (about ½ of 15-ounce can) solid-pack pumpkin (not pie filling)
½ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, melted
¼ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well
2 eggs
3 tablespoons molasses
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
¾ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
1½ teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground ginger
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon baking soda
¼ teaspoon ground cloves
¾ cup finely chopped walnuts (about 3 ounces)

**1.** Preheat oven to 400°F and butter 12 standard-size muffin cups.

**2.** Whisk together the pumpkin, butter, buttermilk, eggs, molasses, and vanilla in a medium bowl. In a large bowl, whisk together the flour, brown sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, ginger, salt, baking soda, and cloves. Make a well in the center of the flour mixture and add the pumpkin mixture, stirring just until combined.

**3.** Spoon the batter into the prepared muffin cups, filling them two-thirds full. Sprinkle the walnuts evenly over batter in each cup.

4. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center of each comes out clean. Cool muffins in cups 5 minutes, then transfer to a rack. Serve muffins warm or at room temperature.

**MAKES 12**

## VARIATIONS

#### PUMPKIN-APPLE MUFFINS

Fold 1 cup cored, peeled, and chopped apples into the batter and proceed as directed.

#### PUMPKIN-DATE MUFFINS

Fold 1 cup chopped dates into the batter and proceed as directed.

#### PUMPKIN PRALINE MUFFINS

Omit the walnuts. Combine 3 tablespoons softened butter, ⅓ cup all-purpose flour, ⅓ cup packed light brown sugar, and 1 cup chopped pecans in a medium bowl and mix well. Spoon batter into the prepared muffin tins. Gently press the topping over the batter.

# CHEESE BLINTZES

**Making blintzes is a lengthy operation, but you can put them together ahead and refrigerate up to one day, then brown just before serving.**

**CHEESE FILLING**

- 1 cup (8 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**
- 1 egg
- 3 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups (about 1 pound) **HOMEMADE FARMER'S CHEESE (PAGE 66)** or **BUTTERMILK POT CHEESE (PAGE 40)**

**BATTER**

- ¾ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- ¾ teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 cup **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well
- ½ cup water
- 3 eggs, at room temperature
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3-4 tablespoons butter, melted

**FOR FRYING**

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, plus more as needed
- 2 tablespoons butter, plus more as needed

**1.** Make the filling: Combine the cream cheese, egg, confectioners' sugar, and vanilla until well blended. Beat in the farmer's cheese until blended. Refrigerate until ready to use.

**2.** Make the batter: Combine the flour, baking soda, salt, granulated sugar, buttermilk, water, eggs, and oil in a food processor and process until

blended, stopping the motor once or twice to scrape flour from sides of container. Transfer mixture to a medium bowl, cover, and refrigerate for at least 1 hour (or up to 12 hours).

**3.** Lightly brush a 6- or 7-inch crêpe pan or skillet with melted butter. Heat over medium-high heat until butter just begins to smoke. Pour ¼ to ⅓ cup batter into pan, tilting to spread it into a thin, even layer. Cook until the edges curl slightly away from skillet and the underside is lightly browned, 1 to 2 minutes. Use a flexible spatula to flip the pancake out of the pan and onto a plate, cooked side up.

**4.** Repeat with the remaining batter, brushing the skillet lightly with melted butter before cooking each pancake. Stack the pancakes, cooked side up, on the plate and let cool.

**5.** Fill each blintz: Spoon about 2 tablespoons of the cheese filling in the center of browned side of each pancake. Fold in the opposite edges about 1 inch, then fold in the remaining edges to enclose the filling, making a rectangular envelope.

**6.** Fry each blintz: Melt 2 tablespoons of oil with 2 tablespoons of butter in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Cook the blintzes in batches, about 1 to 1½ minutes on each side or until golden. Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate to drain, then serve warm.

**MAKES ABOUT TWO DOZEN**

# SPICE-SWIRLED COFFEE CAKE

**A layer of buttery cinnamon swirls through the center of this sour cream coffee cake.**

**SPICE SWIRL**

- ½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup cold **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31),** cut into small pieces
- ¼ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon

**CAKE**

- ½ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31),** softened
- 1 cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup **HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM (PAGES 50 AND 52)**

**1.** Make the spice swirl: Beat the brown sugar, butter, flour, and cinnamon in a small bowl using an electric mixer until blended. Set aside.

**2.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter a 9-inch square baking pan.

**3.** Make the cake: Beat the butter and brown sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer until light and fluffy, about 4 minutes. Scrape down the sides of the bowl. Add eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Scrape down bowl. Add baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Beat on low speed until blended.

**4.** Beat in 1 cup of the flour and then ½ cup of the sour cream until blended. Beat in the remaining flour and sour cream until blended.

**5.** Spoon the batter into the prepared pan and spread evenly. Sprinkle spice swirl mixture over batter and fold once or twice to distribute evenly. Bake about 1 hour or until toothpick inserted near center comes out clean. Let cool on a wire rack for 20 minutes.

**SERVES 9**

# APPLE COFFEE CAKE WITH CARAMEL GLAZE

**This coffee cake is coated with a caramel glaze that's poured over the still-warm cake and quickly broiled until bubbly. Store the cake loosely covered at cool room temperature up to 2 days or refrigerate up to 5 days. Bring to room temperature before serving.**

**CAKE**

- ¾ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, softened
- 1½ cups granulated sugar
- 2 eggs, at room temperature
- ¼ cups unsweetened applesauce
- ½ cup **HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM (PAGES 50 AND 52)**
- 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground allspice
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¾ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- ½ cup chopped walnuts

**CARAMEL GLAZE**

- ¼ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**
- ¼ cup heavy cream
- ½ cup firmly packed dark brown sugar

**1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease a 9-inch springform pan. Dust with flour and shake out the excess.

**2.** Make the cake: Beat the butter and granulated sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer until fluffy. Add the eggs one at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in the applesauce, sour cream, cinnamon, baking soda, allspice, cloves, and salt until blended.

**3.** Reduce the mixer speed to low and beat in the flour and nuts until blended.

**4.** Spoon the batter into the prepared pan. Place the pan on a baking sheet. Bake the cake about 1 hour to 1 hour and 10 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Set the cake on a wire rack to cool for 10 minutes.

**5.** Make the glaze: Combine the butter, cream, and brown sugar in a small saucepan. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, until melted and smooth.

**6.** Preheat the broiler. Spoon the glaze over the top of the cake, allowing the excess to drip down the sides. Broil the cake 6 inches from the heat source until the glaze is bubbly, about 30 seconds. Set the cake in the pan on the rack to cool for 15 minutes. Remove the pan sides. Spread over the sides of the cake any glaze that has dripped down.

**SERVES 8 TO 10**

# CORNMEAL WAFFLES WITH PEACHES AND MASCARPONE TOPPING

**The topping for these tender waffles is sweet, creamy, and rich. It can be made up to 4 hours ahead. Don't forget the peaches; they add the perfect finish.**

**MASCARPONE TOPPING**

- 1 cup heavy cream
- ½ cup (4 ounces) **HOMEMADE MASCARPONE (PAGE 90)**
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract

**CORNMEAL WAFFLES**

- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- ¾ teaspoon baking powder
- ¾ teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well
- 3 eggs, separated and at room temperature
- 3 tablespoons **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, melted
- 4 large ripe peaches, peeled, pitted, and chopped
- 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice (about ½ lemon)

1. Make the topping: Beat the cream in a medium bowl with an electric mixer until soft peaks form. Add the mascarpone, sugar, and vanilla, and beat until mixture is well blended, 15 to 30 seconds longer. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

2. Make the waffles: Preheat oven to 200°F and preheat a waffle iron. Combine the cornmeal, flour, 1 tablespoon of the sugar, baking powder, and baking soda in a large bowl. Whisk together the buttermilk, egg yolks, and butter in a small bowl. Pour this mixture over the dry ingredients and

stir just until blended (batter may be lumpy).

3. Beat the egg whites in a medium bowl with an electric mixer until stiff peaks form. Using a rubber spatula, fold the egg whites into the batter. Coat waffle iron with cooking spray or brush lightly with oil. Spoon the batter onto the waffle iron, using about ⅓ cup batter (amount varies with size of iron); spread it evenly and quickly. Cook according to manufacturer's instructions, then transfer directly to oven rack to keep warm. (Don't stack waffles; they'll stay crisp if kept in one layer.) Repeat with remaining batter.

4. To serve, combine peaches, lemon juice, and remaining 1 tablespoon sugar in a medium bowl and toss to coat. Serve waffles topped with peach mixture and mascarpone.

**MAKES 6 TO 8**

## VARIATION

If peaches are unavailable or if you would like to try something different, use 3½ cups chopped ripe cantaloupe, strawberries, blueberries, or raspberries.

# VANILLA WAFFLES

**To make waffles ahead, wrap cooled, baked waffles individually in plastic wrap and place in airtight freezer bags. Freeze up to 1 month. To reheat, unwrap waffles and place directly on rack in a 350°F oven for 5 to 10 minutes or until heated through and slightly crisp.**

2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
3 tablespoons sugar
2 teaspoons baking powder
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well
½ cup milk
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 egg yolk
2 egg whites

**1.** Coat a waffle iron lightly with cooking spray and preheat the iron. Preheat oven to 200°F.

**2.** Whisk together the flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon, and salt in a large bowl.

**3.** Whisk together the buttermilk, milk, oil, vanilla, and egg yolk in a medium bowl. Pour the mixture over the flour mixture, stirring just until blended.

**4.** Beat the egg whites with an electric mixer in a small bowl until soft peaks form. Gently fold the egg whites into the batter.

**5.** Ladle ⅓ cup batter (or amount recommended by manufacturer's directions) onto the waffle iron. Close the lid and cook the waffles about 4 minutes or until golden. Gently open the lid and remove the waffles with a fork. Serve

immediately or transfer to a baking sheet and keep warm in oven. Repeat with the remaining batter, lightly coating iron with cooking spray each time.

**MAKES 6 TO 8**

## VARIATION

**VANILLA PANCAKES**

Substitute 2 eggs for the egg yolk and 2 egg whites. Beat the eggs into the buttermilk mixture. (There is no need to whip the egg whites.) Heat a griddle or large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Spread thin coating of butter over griddle and let melt. Working in batches, drop batter by ⅓ cupfuls onto the griddle, spacing apart. Cook pancakes until brown on bottom and bubbles form on top, about 3 minutes. Turn pancakes over and cook until bottoms are brown and pancakes are barely firm to touch. Transfer to plates. Repeat with remaining batter, adding more butter to the griddle as needed.

# BANANA-BLUEBERRY MUFFINS

**Overripe bananas can be frozen in their skins and used for baking. Thaw them just long enough to peel and easily mash them. The buttermilk gives the muffins a flavorful tang.**

1¼ cups **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well
1 cup mashed banana (2 medium)
½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 egg white
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
½ cup wheat bran
2 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries

**1.** Preheat oven to 425°F. Butter 12 standard-size muffin cups.

**2.** Combine the buttermilk, banana, brown sugar, oil, egg white, and vanilla in a food processor and process until smooth. Transfer the mixture to a medium bowl. Stir in the wheat bran.

**3.** Whisk together the flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl. Add the banana mixture and mix just until blended. Fold in the blueberries.

**4.** Divide batter evenly among prepared cups. Bake about 15 minutes or until muffins are golden brown and spring back when touched lightly in center. Remove muffins from pans and let cool on a wire rack.

**MAKES 12**

# FRESH FRUIT SMOOTHIE

1 medium banana, sliced and frozen (scant 1 cup)

6 strawberries, frozen (1 cup)

½ cup fresh orange juice

1 cup **HOMEMADE YOGURT (PAGE 15)**

**1.** Combine the banana, strawberries, and orange juice in a blender. Add the yogurt and blend until smooth and creamy. Serve right away.

**SERVES 2**

## VARIATIONS

**MANGO GINGER**

Use ½ cup mango nectar instead of orange juice and 1 cup diced fresh mango instead of strawberries. Add 1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger and 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice.

**APPLE-BERRY**

Use ½ cup apple juice or cider instead of orange juice and 1 cup fresh blueberries instead of strawberries.

**TROPICAL MORNING**

Use ½ cup pineapple juice instead of orange juice and 1 cup cubed fresh or canned pineapple in juice instead of strawberries. Add ¼ teaspoon coconut or almond extract.

# NO FORKS REQUIRED

The plate and the fork have been removed from the equation with these bite-size, party-friendly appetizers and snacks. They all pack the flavor of a full-size dish into a package that you can pick up or scoop and eat in just a couple of fork-free bites.

Chutney Cheese Spread
Herbed Goat Cheese Bites
Olive and Cream Cheese Toasts
Warm Crab Dip
Spinach-Artichoke Dip
Curried Yogurt Dip

Zucchini Triangles
Focaccia with Caramelized Onions and Goat Cheese
Black Tie Potatoes
Wasabi Rice Crackers
Marinated Feta
Mascarpone-Stuffed Dates

# CHUTNEY CHEESE SPREAD

**Once you use homemade cream cheese for making dips, it will be hard to go back to using the store-bought kind. This cheese spread is so easy to make and looks enticing when arranged on a serving plate or cutting board surrounded by crackers and pita crisps.**

1 cup (8 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**
½ cup mango chutney, chopped
¼ cup chopped salted peanuts or walnuts or cashews
½ cup sliced green onions

**1.** Unmold the cheese onto a serving plate and spread it with a spatula to make it flat on top and about 4 inches in diameter.

**2.** Spoon the chutney over the top. Sprinkle with the nuts and green onions.

**MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP**

# HERBED GOAT CHEESE BITES

**These hors d'oeuvres will disappear quickly. The recipe calls for rolling the cheese balls in finely chopped walnuts, but any nuts, such as pistachios or pecans, will work.**

1 cup (6 ounces) **HOMEMADE GOAT CHEESE (PAGE 75)**, softened
¼ cup (2 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**, softened
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh basil
2 teaspoons finely chopped fresh chives
½ cup finely chopped, toasted walnuts

**1.** Mix the goat cheese and cream cheese in a medium bowl until blended. Mix in the basil and chives until blended. Form a heaping teaspoon of the cheese mixture into a small ball and transfer to a sheet of waxed paper. Repeat with remaining cheese mixture, making about 36 balls in total.

**2.** Place the walnuts on a sheet of waxed paper. Roll balls in the walnuts to coat. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve or up to 2 days.

**MAKES 18 SERVINGS**

# OLIVE AND CREAM CHEESE TOASTS

**Always good and simple to make in advance, these canapés have been in my repertoire for years. I guarantee they will impress even your most discriminating guests.**

10 slices firm white or whole-wheat sandwich bread

1½ tablespoons **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, melted

¾ cup (6 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**, softened

⅓ cup pimiento-stuffed green Spanish olives, rinsed, drained, and finely chopped

¼ cup finely chopped scallions

¼ cup finely chopped red bell pepper

¼ teaspoon ground sweet paprika

2 teaspoons medium-dry sherry

⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese

**1.** Preheat oven to 375°F. Cut 40 rounds from bread slices with 2-inch round cutter and arrange on a baking sheet. Brush the top of the bread rounds with butter and bake until pale golden, about 8 minutes. (Leave toasts on baking sheet.)

**2.** Preheat broiler. Mash together the cream cheese, olives, scallions, bell pepper, paprika, and sherry in a medium bowl until blended. Top each toast with 1 teaspoon of the mixture and sprinkle with Parmesan. Broil about 4 inches from the heat until Parmesan begins to turn golden, about 1 minute. Serve warm or at room temperature.

**MAKES 20**

# WARM CRAB DIP

**Be sure that you have this recipe ready to hand out if you serve it to guests; many will request it. The dip also works with smoked salmon or cooked lobster meat.**

4 tablespoons **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**

1 large shallot, minced

¾ cup (6 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**

¼ cup **HOMEMADE CRÈME FRAÍCHE (PAGE 44)**

¼ cup mayonnaise

2 tablespoons Dijon mustard

3 tablespoons minced chives or scallion tops

1 tablespoon finely chopped parsley

½ teaspoon salt

Pinch of cayenne pepper

1½ pounds jumbo lump crabmeat, picked over

⅔ cup coarse dry breadcrumbs Pinch of salt

**1.** Melt 1 tablespoon of the butter in a medium skillet. Add the shallot and cook, stirring often, over medium heat until just beginning to brown, 4 minutes. Remove from the heat and stir in the cream cheese, crème fraîche, mayonnaise, mustard, chives, parsley, salt, and cayenne and scrape into a large bowl. Stir in the crabmeat, breaking it up slightly with a spoon. Spread the crab dip in a shallow baking dish.

**2.** Preheat broiler. Melt the remaining 3 tablespoons of butter in a small saucepan. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the breadcrumbs and a pinch of salt. Sprinkle the crumbs over the crab dip and broil about 8 inches from the heat source or until the dip is heated through and the topping is golden, about 2 minutes. Serve warm.

**SERVES 10 TO 12**

# SPINACH-ARTICHOKE DIP

**A foolproof recipe and a real crowd-pleaser when doubled, this dip is destined to become one of your entertaining standbys. For a richer dip, use crème fraîche (page 44) in place of the sour cream.**

1 (10-ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed

1 (12-ounce) jar artichoke hearts, drained and roughly chopped

½ cup (4 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**

¾ cup **HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM (PAGES 50 AND 52)**

1 cup shredded cheddar cheese (about 4 ounces)

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Pita chips, tortilla chips, or sliced French bread

1 lemon, cut into wedges (optional)

**1.** Preheat oven to 400°F. Squeeze the excess moisture from the spinach. Combine the spinach, artichokes, cream cheese, sour cream, cheddar, salt, and pepper in a large bowl and mix until blended. Scrape the mixture into a small baking dish.

**2.** Bake until lightly golden and heated through, about 15 minutes. Serve warm with chips or bread and the lemon wedges if desired.

**SERVES 6 TO 8**

# CURRIED YOGURT DIP

**Serve this dip with an assortment of fresh crisp vegetables such as cauliflower, broccoli, asparagus, and baby carrots. For a thicker dip, use homemade yogurt cheese (page 18) in place of the yogurt.**

1 cup **HOMEMADE YOGURT (PAGE 15)**
2 teaspoons curry powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon sugar
2 teaspoons cider vinegar
1 teaspoon lemon juice
⅛ teaspoon salt
Paprika, for dusting

**1.** Mix the yogurt, curry powder, cumin, sugar, vinegar, lemon juice, and salt in a medium bowl. Transfer to a serving bowl.

**2.** Dust top with paprika just before serving.

**MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP**

# ZUCCHINI TRIANGLES

**These delicious treats can be made 1 day ahead. Cover tightly with plastic and refrigerate. Bring to room temperature before baking. Look for phyllo (filo) dough in the freezer section of well-stocked supermarkets, and be sure to thaw it according to package directions before using.**

1 medium zucchini (about 5 ounces), trimmed and coarsely grated

½ teaspoon salt

2 tablespoons olive oil

½ medium onion, chopped

⅓ cup chopped fresh basil

2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

1 garlic clove, minced

¼ cup dry white wine

⅓ cup (3 ounces) crumbled **GOAT'S MILK FETA CHEESE (PAGE 80)**

⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese

⅓ cup pine nuts, toasted Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 egg

6 sheets fresh or thawed frozen phyllo pastry

½ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, melted

**1.** Combine the zucchini and salt in a medium bowl and toss to coat. Let stand for 30 minutes. Drain the zucchini well, roll in a kitchen towel, and squeeze dry.

**2.** Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring often, until it begins to brown, about 6 minutes. Add the zucchini and cook, stirring often, until it begins to brown, about 5 minutes. Stir in the basil, parsley, garlic, and wine. Bring the mixture to a simmer. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer 3 minutes. Uncover and stir until any liquid evaporates, about 2 minutes. Transfer the zucchini mixture to a large

bowl and let cool.

**3.** When mixture is cool, stir in feta, Parmesan, and pine nuts. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Mix in the egg.

**4.** Preheat oven to 400°F.

**5.** Grease 2 baking sheets. Place 1 phyllo sheet on a work surface with 1 short end parallel to edge of work surface. (Keep remaining phyllo covered with plastic wrap and a damp kitchen towel.) Brush the phyllo sheet lightly with some of the butter; cut lengthwise into 3 equal strips, each about 4 inches wide. Place 1 generous tablespoon of filling at the bottom end of each strip. Fold a corner of the phyllo over filling. Repeat folding down the length of the strip, brushing twice with butter and forming a triangle. Place filled pastry on prepared baking sheet; brush with butter. Repeat with remaining phyllo sheets and filling.

**6.** Bake until golden brown, about 25 minutes. Serve warm.

**MAKES 18**

# FOCACCIA WITH CARAMELIZED ONIONS AND GOAT CHEESE

**With big, bold flavors in every bite, these hors d'oeuvres are a good choice for a buffet because they will keep well at room temperature.**

3 tablespoons olive oil

3 cups finely chopped onions (about 3 large)

1 teaspoon coarse salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

¼ cup thawed frozen orange juice concentrate

3 tablespoons white wine vinegar

¼ cup (2 ounces) **HOMEMADE GOAT CHEESE (PAGE 75)**, softened

¼ cup (2 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**, softened

¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

1 (10-by 8-inch) prepared focaccia, cut into 1¼-inch squares

**1.** Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the onion, salt, and pepper, and cook, stirring occasionally, until translucent, about 15 minutes. Do not let brown.

**2.** Meanwhile, mix the orange juice concentrate and vinegar in a small bowl. Add to the onion and cook until liquid is absorbed and onion is sweet and very soft, 12 to 15 minutes longer. Transfer to a bowl and let cool.

**3.** Blend the goat cheese, cream cheese, and Parmesan in a medium bowl using a wooden spoon until smooth.

**4.** Preheat oven to 375°F. To assemble, brush focaccia lightly with the remaining oil. Top each square with ½ teaspoon cheese mixture and 1 teaspoon onions. Bake until heated through, about 5 minutes. Serve warm.

**MAKES 48**

## VARIATION

Olives add a pleasant, salty flavor to the focaccia. You can top each square with half a black or green brine-cured olive if desired. Use 48 kalamata or Greek olives, pitted, halved, and added to the topping before baking.

# BLACK TIE POTATOES

**The secret to these hors d'oeuvres is to serve them right after they're assembled and the potatoes are still a little warm and covered with slightly melted goat cheese.**

12 small new red potatoes
1½ teaspoons coarse salt
½ cup (4 ounces) **GOAT'S MILK FETA CHEESE (PAGE 80)**
¼ cup pine nuts, toasted
2 tablespoons chopped kalamata olives
2 tablespoons chopped chives or scallions
1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
¼ teaspoon dried basil
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
24 leaves fresh parsley for garnish

**1.** Cut a thin slice off the top and bottom of each potato. Cut each potato in half crosswise. Place in large saucepan, cover with cold water, and add salt. Bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat to medium and simmer until potatoes are tender when pierced with a fork, 10 to 15 minutes. Be careful not to overcook. Drain and cool.

**2.** Meanwhile, crumble the feta with a fork in a small bowl. Add the pine nuts, olives, chives, olive oil, basil, and pepper, and mix well.

**3.** To assemble, scoop out the centers of the cooked potatoes with a small spoon or melon baller. Fill the centers with a heaping teaspoon of feta mixture. Garnish with parsley and serve at room temperature.

**MAKES 24**

# WASABI RICE CRACKERS

**These flavorful crackers truly explode with the flavor of the wasabi paste. They can also be topped with pieces of smoked salmon or small cooked shrimp. Look for wasabi paste in the Asian section of large supermarkets or specialty gourmet shops.**

1¾ cups (14 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**, softened

3 teaspoons wasabi paste (Japanese horseradish paste), or more to taste

30 thin rice crackers, 2 inches in diameter

1 scallion, thinly sliced

**1.** Combine the cream cheese and wasabi in a food processor, and process until smooth. Scrape down the sides of the bowl if necessary.

**2.** Spoon about 1 teaspoon of the cream cheese mixture onto each cracker. Arrange the crackers on serving trays. Sprinkle with scallions. Serve right away.

**MAKES 24**

# MARINATED FETA

**Enjoy this cheese straight out of the jar or crumble into your favorite salad. Other flavorings to consider include sun-dried tomatoes, garlic cloves, dried hot peppers, and peppercorns.**

1 recipe **GOAT'S MILK FETA CHEESE (PAGE 80)**

2 cups fresh herb sprigs, such as rosemary, thyme, bay leaves, marjoram

Olive or canola oil

**1.** Break the cheese into smaller pieces, about 1-inch chunks. In a sterile, quart jar that has a tight-fitting lid, layer some of the herbs first, then some of the cheese. Repeat until the jar is full. Leave about ½ inch of space at the top. Pour the oil over the cheese and herbs, filling the jar and completely covering the mixture with oil.

**2.** Cover the jar tightly and let stand at room temperature for 24 hours, then refrigerate for up to 2 weeks.

**MAKES 1 POUND**

# MASCARPONE-STUFFED DATES

**For a striking presentation, arrange these stuffed dates on a brightly colored plate; the bold color will really make them pop. For the best flavor, be sure to use plump Medjool dates available at gourmet shops and large supermarkets.**

2 tablespoons **HOMEMADE MASCARPONE (PAGE 90)** *or* **CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**

1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

½ teaspoon honey

Pinch of finely grated lemon zest

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

12 large Medjool dates (about ½ pound)

2 teaspoons chopped parsley

**1.** Mix the mascarpone, lemon juice, honey, and lemon zest in a small bowl and season with salt and pepper. Make a slit in each date and remove the pit. Fill each date carefully with 1½ teaspoons of the mascarpone mixture.

**2.** Transfer the dates to a plate. Sprinkle with the parsley and serve.

**MAKES 12**

# NOT JUST FOR LUNCH

From an Italian-inspired mozzarella panini to a Moroccan chickpea salad, these soups, sandwiches, and salads will leave you deliciously satisfied. They're lunch recipes worth anticipating all morning.

Swiss Chard and Ricotta Calzones
Pizza Margherita
Mozzarella Panini
Grilled Cheese with Figs
Lentil Salad with Feta
Apple Waldorf Salad
Moroccan Chickpea Salad
Mushroom Bisque
Creamy Broccoli-Cauliflower Soup
Chilled Pea Soup
Potato Pancakes with Goat Cheese

# SWISS CHARD AND RICOTTA CALZONES

**These savory turnovers make a great lunch. They can be made ahead and frozen for up to 3 months, then thawed and baked just before serving.**

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 pound Swiss chard, tough stems removed, leaves washed well and shredded

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1 medium red onion, finely chopped

2 balls (1 pound each) fresh or frozen pizza dough, thawed if frozen

1 cup (8 ounces) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**

1½ cups (6 ounces) shredded **HOMEMADE MOZZARELLA (PAGE 84)**

½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Prepared tomato sauce, warmed (optional)

**1.** Preheat the oven to 400°F. Heat 1 tablespoon of the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the Swiss chard and ¼ teaspoon each of the salt and pepper, stirring until the chard is wilted and no liquid remains in the pan, about 3 minutes. Transfer the chard to a medium bowl. Set aside to cool. Squeeze out any remaining liquid if necessary.

**2.** Heat the remaining tablespoon of oil in the same skillet. Add the onion and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add onion to the bowl of chard.

**3.** Divide the dough into 8 equal pieces. On a lightly floured surface, stretch each piece first to a 3- by 4-inch oval, then stretch again to a 6- by 8-inch oval. (Let the dough rest a few minutes if it's too elastic to work with.)

**4.** Stir the ricotta, mozzarella, and Parmesan and remaining ¼ teaspoon of salt and pepper into the cooled chard mixture.

**5.** Assemble the calzones: Spread a rounded ¼ cup chard mixture over half of

each piece of dough, leaving a ¼-inch border; fold over to form a half-moon. Press edges to seal. With a paring knife, cut 2 slits in the top of each calzone.

**6.** Using a wide metal spatula with a thin blade, transfer the calzones to 2 baking sheets lined with parchment, and reshape if needed. Bake until golden, about 25 minutes. Serve with tomato sauce if desired.

**SERVES 8**

# PIZZA MARGHERITA

**The assembled uncooked pizzas can be frozen for up to 1 month. Add an extra 5 to 10 minutes to the baking time for frozen pizzas.**

1½ pounds fresh or frozen pizza dough, thawed if frozen

1 (14-ounce) can peeled whole plum tomatoes, drained

¼ cup capers, drained (optional)

2 teaspoons chopped fresh oregano *or*
½ teaspoon dried oregano

5 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 pounds **HOMEMADE MOZZARELLA (PAGE 84)**, thinly sliced

32 large basil leaves, coarsely chopped

**1.** Preheat oven to 450°F. Place a pizza stone on the lowest rack in the oven, allowing at least 45 minutes for the stone to heat.

**2.** Process the tomatoes in a food processor until coarsely chopped. Transfer tomatoes to a medium bowl. Stir in the capers if desired, the oregano, and 1 tablespoon of the olive oil. Season generously with salt and pepper.

**3.** Divide pizza dough into 4 equal pieces. On a lightly floured surface, stretch one ball of dough into a 12-inch round; transfer to a floured pizza peel, adding flour where the dough sticks. Spread ¼ cup of the tomato mixture over the dough to within 1 inch of the edge. Spread one-quarter of the cheese over the pizza and drizzle with 1 tablespoon of oil. Season with salt and pepper.

**4.** Slide the pizza carefully from the peel onto the heated stone. Bake about 10 minutes or until the bottom is crisp and the cheese is melted. Remove the pizza from the oven, scatter one-quarter of the basil on top, and let stand 2 minutes before serving. Repeat with the remaining dough and toppings.

**MAKES 4 (12-INCH) PIZZAS**

# MOZZARELLA PANINI

**A simple sandwich with a twist: fresh mozzarella cheese and a hint of basil.**

1 pound **HOMEMADE MOZZARELLA (PAGE 84)**, cut into 4 equal pieces about 3 inches by 4 inches

8 slices firm white or whole-wheat sandwich bread

2 eggs

½ cup heavy cream

1 teaspoon chopped fresh basil

1 teaspoon coarse salt

¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons butter

**1.** Arrange the mozzarella on 4 slices of the bread and top with the remaining slices of bread. Trim off the crusts to make 4-inch squares.

**2.** Whisk the eggs in a shallow bowl. Add the cream, basil, and salt and whisk until well blended.

**3.** Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add 1 tablespoon of the butter.

**4.** Dip 2 sandwiches into the egg mixture, turning to coat. Cook until golden brown on the underside, about 2 minutes. Turn and brown on the other side, about 2 minutes. Transfer the sandwiches to individual plates. Repeat with the remaining 2 tablespoons oil, 1 tablespoon butter, and 2 sandwiches. Cut each sandwich in half and serve right away.

**SERVES 4**

# GRILLED CHEESE WITH FIGS

**Fig preserves, cinnamon-raisin bread, and goat cheese transform grilled cheese into a great-tasting, different kind of sandwich.**

1 cup (6 ounces) **HOMEMADE GOAT CHEESE (PAGE 75)**

8 thin slices cinnamon-raisin bread

2 tablespoons fig preserves

**1.** Spread some of the goat cheese on each of 4 bread slices, then spread 1½ teaspoons of the preserves over the cheese. Top with the remaining bread slices. Lightly coat the outside of the bread with cooking spray.

**2.** Heat a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add 2 sandwiches to the pan. Place a cast-iron or heavy skillet on top of sandwiches, and press gently to flatten. Cook (weighted) for 3 minutes on each side or until bread is lightly toasted. Repeat with remaining sandwiches. Cut each sandwich in half and serve right away.

**SERVES 4**

# LENTIL SALAD WITH FETA

**This salad is filled with Middle Eastern flavors: lentils, feta cheese, cured olives, lemon juice, and garlic. It's great served as is, or spoon into pita-bread pockets lined with some leafy lettuce for a tasty sandwich.**

1¼ cups lentils, picked over and rinsed

¼ cup chopped fresh basil

⅓ cup chopped kalamata olives

½ cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 medium red onion, chopped

1 medium red bell pepper, chopped

1 garlic clove, minced

3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (from 1 medium lemon) Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 cup (8 ounces) **GOAT'S MILK FETA CHEESE (PAGE 80),** crumbled

**1.** Cook the lentils in a large saucepan of boiling water until just tender, about 20 minutes. Drain well. Transfer to a large bowl. Mix in the basil and olives.

**2.** Heat the oil in a medium skillet over medium heat. Add the onion, bell pepper, and garlic, and cook, stirring often, until just tender, about 5 minutes. Transfer to the bowl with the lentils.

**3.** Pour the oil from the skillet into a measuring cup. Add enough additional oil to measure ½ cup. Whisk in the lemon juice. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Add the dressing to the salad and toss to coat. Gently mix in the goat cheese. Serve at room temperature.

**SERVES 6**

# APPLE WALDORF SALAD

**The original Waldorf salad created by chef Oscar Tschirky, who was known for his disapproval of elaborate, gourmet fare, reportedly used only apples, celery, and mayonnaise. In this (albeit more elaborate) version, homemade yogurt gives the salad a great, tangy flavor that's offset by the sweetness of the apples.**

½ cup apple cider

¾ cup **HOMEMADE YOGURT (PAGE 15)**

4 cups chopped apples (such as 4 medium Granny Smith, Rome, or Gala)

1 cup seedless grapes, halved (about ⅓ pound)

1 stalk celery, chopped

½ cup golden raisins

½ cup coarsely chopped pecans, toasted

4-6 Boston lettuce leaves

**1.** Bring the cider to a boil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat; cook until reduced to about 3 tablespoons, 15 to 20 minutes. Cool completely.

**2.** Mix the yogurt and cider in a small bowl until blended. Set aside.

**3.** Mix the apples, grapes, celery, raisins, and pecans in a medium bowl. Add the yogurt mixture, tossing gently to coat. Serve the salad on lettuce-lined plates.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

# MOROCCAN CHICKPEA SALAD

**Boldly flavored, this salad is filled with a variety of textures and is simple to prepare. The mild, slightly sweet flavor of the yogurt balances nicely with the spiciness of this salad.**

**CURRY DRESSING**

½ cup **HOMEMADE YOGURT (PAGE 15)**

2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro

1½ teaspoons olive oil

1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice

1½ tablespoons curry powder

½ teaspoon ground cumin Salt and freshly ground black pepper

**SALAD**

1 small cucumber, peeled, seeded, and chopped

1 cup finely shredded carrot

½ cup halved grape or cherry tomatoes

1 (15½-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed

8 cups chopped romaine lettuce (about 1 pound)

**1.** Make the dressing: Combine the yogurt, cilantro, olive oil, lemon juice, curry powder, cumin, and salt and pepper to taste in a small bowl and stir until well blended. Add more curry powder and cumin to your taste if desired. Set aside.

**2.** Make the salad: Combine the cucumber, carrot, tomatoes, and chickpeas in a medium bowl. Reserve ¼ cup of the dressing. Pour the remaining dressing over the chickpea mixture, tossing gently to coat.

**3.** To serve, place 2 cups of lettuce on each of 4 plates. Drizzle each serving with about 1 tablespoon dressing. Top each plate with one-quarter of the chickpea mixture.

**SERVES 4**

# MUSHROOM BISQUE

**Roasting the mushrooms gives this soup a robust, earthy flavor, and the homemade crème fraîche gives it a rich, silky texture.**

1 pound portobello mushrooms, stemmed, dark gills removed, caps cut into ¾-inch pieces

1 pound cremini mushrooms, trimmed and halved

6 tablespoons olive oil Salt and freshly ground black pepper

5 cups vegetable broth

2 tablespoons butter

1 medium onion, chopped

3 garlic cloves, minced

¼ cup plus 2 tablespoons Madeira wine

3 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour

1 cup **HOMEMADE CRÈME FRAÍCHE (PAGE 44)**

¼ teaspoon dried thyme

**1.** Preheat oven to 400°F. Line 2 large baking sheets with foil. Divide the mushrooms between the prepared baking sheets; drizzle with the oil and season generously with salt and pepper; toss to coat. Cover with foil and roast the mushrooms for 30 minutes. Uncover and roast until mushrooms are tender and still moist, about 15 minutes longer. Cool slightly. Combine half the mushrooms with 2 cups of the broth in a food processor and process until smooth.

**2.** Melt the butter in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring often, until onion is tender, about 5 minutes. Add the Madeira and simmer until almost all of the liquid evaporates, about 2 minutes. Add the flour and stir 2 minutes. Add the remaining 3 cups of broth, crème fraîche, and thyme. Stir in the remaining roasted mushrooms and mushroom purée. Simmer over medium heat until slightly thickened, about 10 minutes. Season soup to taste with salt and pepper. Serve hot.

**SERVES 6**

# CREAMY BROCCOLI-CAULIFLOWER SOUP

**Homemade yogurt gives this soup a creamy consistency and great taste while keeping the calories down. If you prefer a chunkier consistency, don't purée the soup all the way. Serve with crusty French bread.**

2 cups broccoli florets (about 1 pound)
1 cup cauliflower florets (half of large head)
1 large all-purpose potato, peeled and chopped
1 large onion, chopped
1 (14½-ounce) can chicken or vegetable broth
1 cup milk
½ cup **HOMEMADE YOGURT (PAGE 15)**, plus additional for topping
½ teaspoon dried thyme
½ teaspoon salt Freshly ground black pepper

**1.** Combine the broccoli, cauliflower, potato, onion, and 1 cup of the broth in a large saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce the heat and simmer until the vegetables are tender, about 15 minutes.

**2.** Transfer the mixture to a food processor and process (in batches if necessary) until smooth. Return the purée to the pan and add the remaining broth and milk. Whisk in the yogurt until blended. Stir in the thyme and salt and pepper to taste. Heat over low heat, stirring occasionally, just until heated through; do not boil.

**3.** Ladle the soup into serving bowls and top with additional yogurt.

**SERVES 4**

# CHILLED PEA SOUP

**This classic is an English favorite. It's the perfect refreshing dish for a hot summer day.**

2 cups **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well

4 cups shelled peas, plus more for garnish (about 4½ pounds in the pod)

⅛ teaspoon salt

10 fresh mint leaves Salt and freshly ground black pepper

**1.** Bring the buttermilk to a simmer in a medium saucepan and add peas and salt. Simmer for 1 to 2 minutes over medium heat, stirring often so that the buttermilk does not boil.

**2.** Transfer the peas and liquid to a blender, add the mint leaves, and process until puréed (hold the lid on firmly with a dishcloth).

**3.** Strain the mixture through a fine sieve set over a large bowl; discard the solids. Place the bowl with the strained mixture inside a larger bowl full of ice water. Stir continuously until cool. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**SERVES 4**

# POTATO PANCAKES WITH GOAT CHEESE

**The addition of goat cheese turns this simple side dish into a satisfying lunch or dinner. To grate the potatoes, use a hand grater or a food processor fitted with the shredding disk to grate the potatoes.**

4 roasted garlic cloves
4 russet potatoes (about 1½ pounds), peeled and grated
½ cup finely chopped scallions
¼ cup unbleached all-purpose flour
½ cup (3 ounces) **HOMEMADE GOAT CHEESE (PAGE 75)**
2 eggs, at room temperature ½ teaspoon salt
3 tablespoons vegetable oil

**1.** Preheat oven to 200°F. Combine the garlic, potatoes, scallions, flour, goat cheese, eggs, and salt in a large bowl and mix until blended.

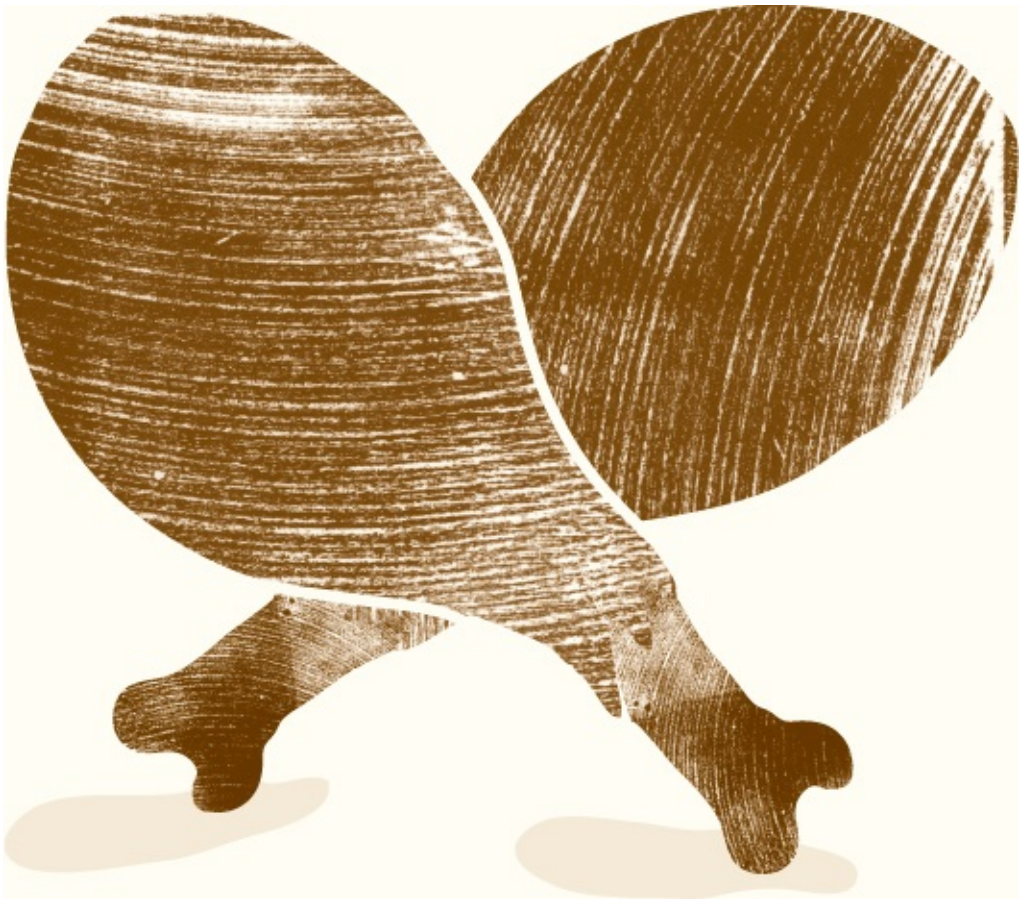
**2.** Heat the oil in a large, heavy skillet over medium-high heat. For each pancake, spoon about ⅓ cup batter into the skillet and flatten slightly to about 4 inches in diameter. Cook the pancakes about 2 minutes on each side or until golden and crisp.

**3.** Transfer the pancakes to paper towels to drain, then transfer to a baking sheet and keep warm in the oven. Repeat with remaining batter and serve warm.

**MAKES 8 TO 10**

# THE MAIN EVENT

Along with ease of preparation, these main-dish recipes highlight the great variety of flavors that cooking with fresh cheese and dairy products offers. I know from experience that good food needn't take long to make — and in this chapter there's nothing really time-consuming; just easy and delicious recipes.




Spinach Lasagna Roll-Ups
Broccoli-Stuffed Shells
Penne with Herbed Goat Cheese and Tomatoes
Cheesy Chicken Pasta
Eggplant Rollatini
Spinach Ricotta Pie
Eggplant Parmesan
Grilled Steaks with Flavored Butters

Beef Stroganoff
Crab Cakes with Horseradish Cream
Broccoli Rabe and Ricotta Frittata
Chicken Enchiladas
Crispy Buttermilk Chicken
Chicken Curry with Yogurt
Easy Chiles Rellenos

# SPINACH LASAGNA ROLL-UPS

**This recipe is easier and faster to make than traditional lasagna, but just as delicious.**

16 dried lasagna noodles
1 tablespoon olive oil
1 large onion, finely chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
3 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour
2½ cups milk
Salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 cups (1 pound) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**
1 (16-ounce) package frozen cut spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
4 ounces **HOMEMADE MOZZARELLA (PAGE 84)**
1 egg
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

**1.** Grease a 9- by 13-inch baking dish. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil.

**2.** Cook half of the lasagna noodles in the boiling water until al dente, about 10 minutes. Remove with tongs or a slotted spoon to a large bowl of cold water. Repeat with remaining noodles. Lay noodles flat on a kitchen towel and cover with plastic wrap.

**3.** Heat the oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Reserve ⅓ cup of the onion mixture. Add the flour to the pan and stir constantly for 1 minute. Gradually whisk in the milk until smooth. Bring to a simmer and cook, whisking constantly, until thickened slightly, about 3 minutes. Remove from the heat and season with salt and pepper. Spread ½ cup sauce in the bottom of the prepared baking dish.

**4.** Preheat oven to 425°F. Combine the reserved onion mixture, ricotta, spinach, and mozzarella in a food processor and pulse until well blended. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add the egg and pulse to blend.

**5.** Spread about 3 tablespoons of spinach mixture over one noodle. Roll up firmly and place seam-side down in prepared pan. Repeat with the remaining noodles and filling. Spoon the remaining sauce over the lasagna rolls and sprinkle with the Parmesan.

**6.** Bake, uncovered, for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the sauce is bubbling and golden. Let cool 5 to 10 minutes before serving.

**SERVES 8**

# BROCCOLI-STUFFED SHELLS

**These pasta shells stuffed with broccoli, ricotta, Parmesan cheese, and fresh basil can be made ahead up to 1 day. Cover and refrigerate and bring to room temperature before baking. For a little extra flavor, try adding 1 tablespoon of fennel seeds to the filling. You can also substitute 4 cups of fresh spinach, lightly steamed, for the broccoli.**

2 cups broccoli florets (from about 1 pound of broccoli)
24 jumbo pasta stuffing shells
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 medium onion, finely chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced
3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil or 1 tablespoon dried
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (from 1 medium lemon)
1¼ cups (10 ounces) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**
¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese Salt and freshly ground black pepper
6 cups homemade tomato sauce or 2 (26-ounce) jars prepared sauce

**1.** Place broccoli in a medium saucepan with 1 inch of water. Bring to a boil, cover, reduce heat, and steam broccoli until tender, about 10 minutes.

**2.** Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to boil. Add the pasta shells and cook according to package directions. Drain, rinse with cold running water, and drain again. Pat dry with paper towels.

**3.** Heat the oil in a medium skillet. Add the onion and cook over medium-high heat, stirring often, until softened, about 7 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, for 30 seconds. Scrape onion mixture into bowl of food processor. Add the broccoli, basil, and lemon juice and process until broccoli is chopped finely. Add the ricotta and Parmesan and process to blend. Transfer the mixture to a medium bowl and season to taste with salt and pepper.

**4.** Preheat oven to 400°F. Spread half of the tomato sauce in a large, shallow

baking dish. Spoon a heaping tablespoon of filling into each shell and arrange stuffed side up in the dish. Cover with the remaining sauce. Cover the casserole with foil and bake until heated through, about 40 minutes. Serve hot with Parmesan cheese if desired.

**SERVES 6 TO 8**

# PENNE WITH HERBED GOAT CHEESE AND TOMATOES

**The herbed goat cheese gives this pasta dish a creamy sauce with lots of flavor. The recipe calls for penne, but it can also be made with pasta twists or bowties. I like to use whole-wheat pasta here; its nutty flavor pairs well with the tangy goat cheese sauce.**

1 pound penne

1½ cups (12 ounces) **HERBED GOAT CHEESE (PAGE 77)**

½ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese Salt and freshly ground black pepper

½ pint grape tomatoes, halved

¼ cup pitted, sliced black olives

**1.** Cook the penne in a large pot of boiling salted water until al dente, according to package instructions; reserve ½ cup cooking water and drain.

**2.** Return the pasta to pot and toss with the goat cheese and Parmesan. Season to taste with salt and pepper. If sauce seems too thick, add some of the reserved pasta water. Stir in tomatoes and olives and serve right away.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

# CHEESY CHICKEN PASTA

**This satisfying pasta dish is simplicity itself. Keep the ingredients on hand so it can be assembled quickly during the week. It's a great kid-friendly dish.**

1½ pounds chicken cutlets
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
8 ounces fusilli
1 pint cherry or grape tomatoes, halved
8 ounces **HOMEMADE MOZZARELLA (PAGE 84)**, cut into small pieces
¼ cup chopped fresh parsley
¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese, plus more for serving
2 tablespoons butter

**1.** Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil for pasta. Meanwhile, heat a grill to medium; lightly oil grates. Season the chicken with salt and pepper. Grill the chicken 2 to 3 minutes per side or until no longer pink on the inside. Remove from the grill and cut into thin strips.

**2.** Cook the pasta until al dente, according to package instructions. Reserve 1 cup pasta water; drain pasta. Return the pasta to pot. Add the chicken, tomatoes, mozzarella, parsley, Parmesan, and butter. Toss to combine. Add the reserved pasta water a little at a time to create a sauce that coats pasta, if necessary. Serve with additional Parmesan.

**SERVES 4**

# EGGPLANT ROLLATINI

**In this dish, eggplant slices are grilled and rolled with ricotta filling, then topped with tomato sauce before baking. It's surprisingly easy to make and is a great meatless entrée that always satisfies nonvegetarians.**

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon red wine vinegar

1 large eggplant, cut lengthwise into ¼-inch slices Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1½ cups (12 ounces) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**

½ cup grated Parmesan cheese, plus extra for sprinkling

8 fresh basil leaves, thinly sliced

2 cups homemade or prepared tomato sauce

**1.** Preheat oven to 375°F. Preheat a grill pan over medium-high heat. Mix olive oil and vinegar in a small bowl and brush onto both sides of the eggplant slices; season both sides with salt and pepper.

**2.** Grill the eggplant slices, turning once, until tender and golden brown, 3 to 4 minutes on each side. Transfer the eggplant slices to a rimmed baking sheet.

**3.** Mix the ricotta, Parmesan, and half of the basil in a medium bowl until blended; season with salt and pepper. Spoon about 3 tablespoons of the cheese mixture onto each slice of eggplant beginning 1 inch from the bottom edge and leaving a ¼-inch border on each side. Starting with a short end, roll each slice and arrange seam side down on the baking sheet.

**4.** Spoon the tomato sauce over rolls and bake until warmed through, about 15 minutes. Sprinkle with the Parmesan and the remaining basil and serve hot.

**SERVES 4**

# SPINACH RICOTTA PIE

**This rustic pie combines the flavors of spinach and fresh, sweet ricotta cheese. Serve it with an antipasto or tossed salad and garlic bread for a simple and satisfying meal. The pie can also be made with broccoli or asparagus.**

- 1 (9-inch) piecrust, at room temperature
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 (10-ounce) package frozen chopped spinach, thawed and squeezed dry
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 2 cups (1 pound) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**
- 8 ounces **HOMEMADE MOZZARELLA (PAGE 84)**, shredded
- 1 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 3 eggs, slightly beaten

**1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Press the dough into a 9-inch square glass or ceramic pie dish. Fold edge under and crimp decoratively.

**2.** Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring often, until tender, about 8 minutes. Stir in the spinach, salt, pepper, and nutmeg, and cook until all the liquid from the spinach evaporates, about 3 minutes.

**3.** Combine ricotta, mozzarella, and Parmesan in a large bowl. Blend in the eggs. Add spinach mixture and mix well.

**4.** Spoon the cheese mixture into the piecrust. Bake until the filling is set in center and brown on top, about 40 minutes. Let stand 10 minutes before serving.

**SERVES 6**

# EGGPLANT PARMESAN

**This popular recipe is similar to lasagna but made with cooked eggplant slices instead. Many recipes call for frying the eggplant, but here it's baked, giving it a crisp texture without the extra fat calories.**

2 eggs
2 tablespoons water
¾ cup plain dry breadcrumbs
¾ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese, plus 2 tablespoons for topping
1 teaspoon dried basil
½ teaspoon dried oregano
½ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 large eggplants (about 12 ounces each), peeled and cut into ½-inch rounds
6 cups homemade tomato sauce or 2 (26-ounce) jars prepared sauce
12 ounces **HOMEMADE MOZZARELLA (PAGE 84)**, thinly sliced

**1.** Preheat oven to 375°F. Brush 2 baking sheets with oil. Whisk together the eggs and water in a shallow bowl. Mix the breadcrumbs, ¾ cup Parmesan, basil, oregano, salt, and pepper on a large sheet of waxed paper.

**2.** Dip the eggplant slices in the egg mixture, letting excess drip off, then dredge in breadcrumb mixture, coating well. Place the coated eggplant slices on the prepared baking sheets. Bake until golden brown on bottom, 20 to 25 minutes. Turn slices; continue baking until browned on other side, 20 to 25 minutes longer. Remove from oven, and increase the temperature to 400°F.

**3.** Spread 2 cups of the tomato sauce in a 9- by 13-inch baking dish. Arrange half the eggplant in the dish; cover with 2 cups sauce, then half the cup mozzarella. Repeat with remaining eggplant, sauce, and mozzarella. Sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons Parmesan.

**4.** Bake until the sauce is bubbling and the cheese is melted, 15 to 20 minutes.

Let stand 5 minutes before serving.

**SERVES 8 TO 10**

## VARIATION

**EGGPLANT PARMESAN HEROES**

**1.** Preheat oven to 375°F. Prepare eggplant as directed. Slice 4 (12-inch) loaves of Italian bread in half horizontally. Arrange bottom halves of loaves on a large baking sheet and tops on another large baking sheet, all with cut sides up. Spread ¼ cup tomato sauce on each top and bottom. Divide eggplant among the bottom halves, overlapping slices slightly. Top each bottom half with a few slices of mozzarella.

**2.** Bake open-faced sandwiches in lower third of oven until cheese melts, about 3 minutes. When cheese begins to melt, put tops of loaves in upper third of oven and bake until edges are golden, 3 to 4 minutes (watch tops closely; they burn easily). Put tops on bottoms to make sandwiches; slice into serving pieces.

# GRILLED STEAKS WITH FLAVORED BUTTERS

**Strip steaks are tender and delicious on their own, but the flavored butter definitely gives them a lift. The butters can also be served with pork chops or chicken or tossed with warm pasta or rice.**

Flavored butters (see below)
4 strip steaks, 10 ounces each, ¾-inch thick
1 tablespoon olive oil
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

**1.** Prepare one or more of the flavored butters (see below), and refrigerate until ready to serve.

**2.** Preheat a grill or heat a cast-iron grill pan over medium-high heat. Rub the steaks with the olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Grill the steaks for about 5 minutes on each side for medium rare. Remove from the heat and let stand for 5 minutes, then transfer to plates. Serve with flavored butter.

**BLUE CHEESE BUTTER:** Mix 3 tablespoons Homemade Butter (pages 28 and 31) with 2 tablespoons crumbled blue cheese until blended. Pack into a small cup, and refrigerate until ready to use.

**MUSTARD-HORSERADISH BUTTER:** Mix 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard and 1 teaspoon prepared horseradish with 4 tablespoons Homemade Butter (pages 28 and 31) until blended. Pack into a small cup, and refrigerate until ready to use.

**GARLIC-HERB BUTTER:** Mix 3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh herbs, such as basil, thyme, or tarragon or a combination of herbs, and ½ teaspoon minced garlic with 4 tablespoons Homemade Butter (pages 28 and 31) until blended. Pack into a small cup, and refrigerate until ready to use.

# BEEF STROGANOFF

**Traditional components of this dish, named after the nineteenth-century Russian diplomat Count Paul Stroganov, include tender strips of beef, sliced mushrooms, and a sauce thickened with sour cream, all of which are included here. Serve it over egg noodles or rice.**

3 tablespoons **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**

2 pounds sirloin steak, cut across the grain into thin slices

2 medium onions, thinly sliced

1 pound cremini mushrooms, sliced

1 tablespoon unbleached all-purpose flour

½ teaspoon paprika

¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper Dash of cayenne pepper

1 cup **HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM (PAGES 50 AND 52)**

**1.** Heat 1 tablespoon of the butter in a large heavy skillet until melted. Add the steak and cook, turning often, until browned, 2 to 3 minutes. Remove to bowl.

**2.** Heat another tablespoon of the butter in the skillet. Add the onions and cook, stirring often, 10 minutes. Add the mushrooms, reduce the heat, cover, and cook for 10 minutes

**3.** Remove the mushrooms and onions to the bowl with the steak. To the pan juices add the remaining 1 tablespoon of butter and stir in the flour, paprika, pepper, and cayenne. Cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Stir in the sour cream. Add the meat mixture and heat, stirring occasionally, just until heated through.

**SERVES 6**

# CRAB CAKES WITH HORSERADISH CREAM

**The sour cream-horseradish sauce makes these crab cakes worth making. The sauce would also be good with cooked shrimp or as a topping for steak or grilled burgers.**

1 cup **HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM (PAGES 50 AND 52)**
2 tablespoons drained prepared horseradish
1 pound lump crabmeat, picked free of shell
1 cup dry breadcrumbs
4 scallions including green tops, finely chopped Pinch of cayenne
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons canola oil

**1.** Mix together ¾ cup of the sour cream and the horseradish in a small bowl until well blended; set aside.

**2.** Combine the crabmeat, the remaining ¼ cup sour cream, ¼ cup of the breadcrumbs, the scallions, cayenne, salt, and pepper. Shape the crab mixture into 8 patties. Coat the patties with the remaining ¾ cup breadcrumbs.

**3.** Heat the oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Working in batches if necessary, cook the cakes until golden brown and crisp, about 2 minutes on each side. Drain the crab cakes on paper towels. Serve right away with the horseradish cream.

**SERVES 4**

# BROCCOLI RABE AND RICOTTA FRITTATA

**Although a frittata is often described as an open-faced omelet, it's thicker and can be eaten at room temperature. This hearty version can be served for lunch or dinner with a tossed green salad.**

1 bunch broccoli rabe, tough stems removed

9 eggs

1 cup (8 ounces) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**

¾ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 garlic clove, minced

2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

**1.** Preheat oven to 325°F. Cook the broccoli rabe in a large pot of boiling, salted water until almost tender, about 4 minutes. Drain. Rinse under cold water and drain thoroughly. Cut the broccoli rabe into 2-inch lengths and set aside.

**2.** Beat the eggs with the ricotta and ¼ teaspoon each of the salt and the pepper in a large bowl.

**3.** In a medium cast-iron or ovenproof nonstick skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Add the broccoli rabe and the remaining ½ teaspoon salt and ¼ teaspoon pepper and cook, stirring, for 2 minutes.

**4.** Arrange the broccoli rabe in the skillet and pour in the egg mixture. Cook, without stirring, until the edges start to set, about 2 minutes. Sprinkle the Parmesan over the top and bake until firm, about 25 minutes. Serve hot or at room temperature.

**SERVES 4**

# CHICKEN ENCHILADAS

**These chicken enchiladas are not difficult to make, and your family and friends will love them. They can be assembled ahead then covered tightly and frozen for up to 3 months.**

1 (14½-ounce) can diced tomatoes with juice
1 (4-ounce) can chopped green chiles
1¼ teaspoons salt
½ teaspoon ground coriander (optional)
1 cup **HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM (PAGES 50 AND 52)**
2½ cups chopped cooked chicken
½ cup **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**, softened
¼ cup finely diced onion
10 flour tortillas (6- to 7-inch diameter)
1 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese (about 4 ounces) Cilantro (optional)

**1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Place tomatoes, chiles, ½ teaspoon salt, coriander if desired, and sour cream in a food processor and process about 1 minute or until almost puréed.

**2.** Combine chicken, cream cheese, onions, and remaining ¾ teaspoon salt in a medium bowl and mix well.

**3.** Heat tortillas in a stack in microwave on high for 45 seconds to soften. Place ¼ cup of chicken filling on each tortilla and roll up.

**4.** Spray a 9- by 13-inch glass baking pan with cooking spray. Place filled tortillas seam side down in the dish, making 2 rows of 5 tortillas each. Pour blended tomato mixture over tortillas. Cover pan with foil.

**5.** Bake for 40 minutes. Remove foil, sprinkle with cheddar, and bake 10 minutes longer or until cheese melts. Serve hot with a sprinkling of fresh cilantro if desired.

**SERVES 6**

# CRISPY BUTTERMILK CHICKEN

**Marinating chicken in buttermilk gives it an extremely tender and juicy texture, and it also imparts a wonderful tangy flavor to the coating. Adding cornmeal to the breadcrumb coating gives the skin extra crunch.**

- 1 cup **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well
- 1 teaspoon hot pepper sauce
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 4 pounds chicken parts, such as legs, thighs, and wings, rinsed and patted dry
- 4 cups fresh breadcrumbs
- 1 cup cornmeal
- ¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano

**1.** Mix the buttermilk, hot pepper sauce, salt, and pepper in a large bowl. Add the chicken, turning to coat. Cover and refrigerate for 2 to 4 hours.

**2.** Preheat oven to 400°F. Generously rub a baking sheet with oil.

**3.** Mix the breadcrumbs, cornmeal, Parmesan, thyme, and oregano on a large sheet of waxed paper. Remove the chicken from the buttermilk mixture one piece at a time, shaking off the excess. Dredge the pieces in the breadcrumb mixture, turning to coat evenly. Arrange the chicken pieces on the prepared baking sheet.

**4.** Bake for 35 to 45 minutes or until the chicken is golden brown and no longer pink in the middle. Serve hot.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

# CHICKEN CURRY WITH YOGURT

**Serve this mildly spiced curry over rice with bowls of mango chutney, raisins, sliced almonds, and toasted coconut as accompaniments.**

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 medium onion, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
2 cooked chicken breast halves (about 1 pound) cut into ½-to 1-inch pieces
1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 cup **HOMEMADE YOGURT (PAGE 15)**
1 teaspoon curry powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
¼ cup chopped fresh cilantro Salt and freshly ground black pepper

**1.** Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Add the garlic and cook, stirring, 1 minute. Stir in the chicken, chickpeas, yogurt, curry powder, and cumin and mix well to blend.

**2.** Cook over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes or until heated through. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the cilantro. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**SERVES 4**

# EASY CHILES RELLENOS

**Traditionally, these chiles are stuffed, batter-dipped, fried, and then baked. This version is much simpler: The cheese filling is spread on the chile, rolled, and then baked.**

1½ cups (12 ounces) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**

⅔ cup (5 ounces) crumbled **GOAT'S MILK FETA CHEESE (PAGE 80)**

⅔ cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese

¼ cup minced fresh cilantro plus additional sprigs for garnish

2 tablespoons minced fresh oregano *or* 2 teaspoons dried

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 teaspoon ground cumin

1 teaspoon chipotle chili powder
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

2 (7-ounce) cans whole green chiles, rinsed and patted dry Prepared tomato salsa, warmed

**1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Mix the ricotta, feta, cheddar, cilantro, oregano, garlic, cumin, and chili powder in a large bowl. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

**2.** Spread a heaping ¼ cup of filling onto each chile. Roll up chiles, starting with a narrow end, to enclose the filling. Transfer the chiles to a 9- by 13-inch baking dish. Cover and bake until cheese mixture is very hot, about 15 minutes. Transfer chiles to plate. Serve with salsa and garnish with cilantro.

**SERVES 4**

# SUPER SIDES

Side dishes have always been stars in the making, and now their time has come to shine because the addition of fresh, soft cheese and dairy products to these dishes elevates them to star status!

Garlicky Smashed Potatoes
Creamy Parmesan-Pepper Dressing
Green Salad with Fresh Herb Dressing
Spinach Salad with Herbed Goat Cheese
Coleslaw with Buttermilk Dressing
Tomato-Mozzarella Salad
Beet Salad with Goat Cheese and Bacon
Buttermilk Onion Rings
Tomato Gratin
Cornmeal Biscuits
Twisted Whey-Wheat Rolls

# GARLICKY SMASHED POTATOES

**White potatoes can be used instead of Red Bliss or other red-skin potatoes, but their skins lack the rosy color that Red Bliss skins add to the finished dish. Try to get potatoes of equal size; if only larger potatoes are available, increase the cooking time by about 10 minutes.**

4 tablespoons **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**

1 garlic clove, minced

2 pounds red-skin potatoes such as Red Bliss (each about 2 inches in diameter)

2 garlic cloves, peeled

1½ teaspoons salt

1 bay leaf

½ cup (4 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**, softened

½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

**1.** Heat the butter in a small skillet over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and cook, stirring often, about 30 seconds or until fragrant. Remove from the heat.

**2.** Place potatoes, peeled garlic, 1 teaspoon of the salt, and the bay leaf in a large saucepan and cover by 1 inch with cold water. Bring to a boil over high heat, and then reduce heat and simmer gently until potatoes are just tender, 35 to 45 minutes. Reserve ½ cup cooking water, then drain potatoes. Return potatoes to pot. Discard bay leaf and remove and set aside the garlic cloves. Let the potatoes stand, uncovered, about 5 minutes.

**3.** While potatoes dry, combine butter mixture, cream cheese, and cooked garlic cloves in a medium bowl. Stir until smooth and well blended. Add ¼ cup of the reserved cooking water, the remaining ½ teaspoon salt, and the pepper.

**4.** Using a rubber spatula or the back of a wooden spoon, smash potatoes just enough to break skins. Stir in cream cheese mixture until most of liquid has

been absorbed and chunks of potatoes remain. Add more cooking water, 1 tablespoon at a time as needed, until potatoes are desired consistency. Season to taste with additional salt and pepper and serve right away.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

# CREAMY PARMESAN-PEPPER DRESSING

**This delicious dressing is good served over leafy greens or spinach or try it with a coleslaw mix or blanched fresh vegetables.**

⅔ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well

⅔ cup **LARGE-CURD COTTAGE CHEESE (PAGE 64)**

⅓ cup grated Parmesan cheese

4 teaspoons white wine vinegar

1 teaspoon minced garlic

½ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon coarsely ground black pepper

Combine the buttermilk, cottage cheese, Parmesan, vinegar, and garlic in a food processor and process until smooth. Transfer the mixture to a small bowl and stir in salt and pepper.

**MAKES ABOUT 1½ CUPS**

# GREEN SALAD WITH FRESH HERB DRESSING

**This leafy green salad is refreshing before, with, or after dinner. The dressing can be made ahead and refrigerated airtight for up to 1 day. Stir well before using.**

**DRESSING**

- 1 cup **HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM (PAGES 50 AND 52)**
- 1 tablespoon tarragon vinegar
- 1 tablespoon prepared horseradish
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon minced fresh chives

**SALAD**

- 1 small head curly leaf lettuce, rinsed and spun dry
- 1 ripe avocado, peeled and sliced
- ½ medium cucumber, sliced

1. Make the dressing: Mix the sour cream, vinegar, horseradish, sugar, salt, and chives in a small bowl until well blended.

2. Make the salad: Tear the lettuce into small pieces and divide among 4 serving bowls. Arrange avocado and cucumber over lettuce and top with dressing. Serve right away.

**MAKES ABOUT 1 CUP DRESSING**

# SPINACH SALAD WITH HERBED GOAT CHEESE

**Dried cranberries and herbed goat cheese add texture and flavor to this longtime favorite salad.**

1 teaspoon **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**

⅓ cup sliced almonds

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

Salt and freshly ground black pepper

1 (10-ounce) bag baby spinach, rinsed and spun dry

½ cup dried cranberries *or* cherries

½ cup (4 ounces) **HERBED GOAT CHEESE (PAGE 77)**, crumbled

**1.** Melt the butter in a small skillet. Add the almonds and cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until golden, about 3 minutes. Drain on paper towels and let cool completely.

**2.** Whisk the olive oil with the vinegar in a small bowl and season to taste with salt and pepper. Toss the spinach, dried cranberries, and almonds in a large bowl. Add the vinaigrette and toss well. Add the goat cheese, toss the salad lightly, and serve.

**SERVES 4**

# COLESLAW WITH BUTTERMILK DRESSING

**This slaw (the word "cole" comes from the German word *kohl,* which means cabbage) is a picnic favorite. The buttermilk gives it a tangy, rich flavor.**

½ head green cabbage, shredded
1 large carrot, peeled and shredded
1 medium sweet onion, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon salt
4 slices bacon
1 cup **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well
2 tablespoons canola oil
2 tablespoons cider vinegar
1 teaspoon dry mustard
2 teaspoons sugar
Salt and freshly ground black pepper

**1.** Toss the cabbage, carrot, onion, and salt in a colander set over a medium bowl. Let stand until cabbage wilts, at least 1 hour or up to 4 hours. Rinse under cold running water, and press to drain; pat dry with paper towels.

**2.** Cook the bacon in a medium skillet over medium heat until crisp and brown, about 6 minutes. Transfer the bacon with a slotted spoon to paper towels to drain. Crumble cooled bacon.

**3.** Mix the buttermilk, oil, vinegar, mustard, and sugar in a medium bowl. Add the cabbage mixture and bacon and toss to coat. Season to taste with additional salt and the pepper. Cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.

**SERVES 4 TO 6**

# TOMATO-MOZZARELLA SALAD

**In Italy, this is known as *insalata caprese* (the salad from Capri). It's best in summer, when tomatoes and basil are at their peak. Homemade mozzarella has a softer texture and sweeter, more delicate flavor than commercial mozzarella. The best way to slice fresh mozzarella is to freeze it first for about 1 hour.**

- 4 ripe medium garden tomatoes (about 1½ pounds), each cut into 6 slices
- 8 ounces **HOMEMADE MOZZARELLA (PAGE 84)**, cut into 12 slices
- ¼ teaspoon coarse salt
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ cup fresh basil leaves

Arrange 4 tomato slices and 2 mozzarella slices on each of 6 salad plates. Sprinkle evenly with salt and pepper; drizzle with oil. Top evenly with basil and serve.

**SERVES 6**

# BEET SALAD WITH GOAT CHEESE AND BACON

**The natural sweetness of the beets is a perfect match for the tang of the goat cheese and smoked flavor of the bacon.**

- 12 small red beets (about 1½ pounds), stems and roots trimmed
- 2 tablespoons plus ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil Coarse salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 4 slices bacon
- 1½ tablespoons red wine vinegar
- ¼ cup snipped fresh chives or chopped green onions
- ½ cup (4 ounces) **HERBED GOAT CHEESE (PAGE 77)**, crumbled

**1.** Preheat oven to 450°F. On a large sheet of aluminum foil, toss the beets with the 2 tablespoons oil and season with salt and pepper. Seal foil and place the packet on a rimmed baking sheet. Roast the beets until tender when pierced with a paring knife, about 45 minutes. Let cool slightly, then peel and cut into quarters.

**2.** Meanwhile, cook the bacon in a small skillet until crisp, 8 to 10 minutes. Transfer bacon to a paper towel-lined plate to drain. Crumble when cool enough to handle.

**3.** Whisk together the ¼ cup oil and vinegar in a large bowl until emulsified. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Add beets and chives and toss gently to combine.

**4.** Spoon beets onto serving pates and top each serving with crumbled bacon and goat cheese. Serve right away.

**SERVES 4**

# BUTTERMILK ONION RINGS

**These are best served right after frying, when the coating is light and crisp. If left to stand, they may become soggy.**

1 cup **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well
1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
½ cup cornmeal
¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
1 teaspoon salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
2 medium sweet Vidalia onions, sliced into ¼-inch thick rings
4 cups vegetable oil

**1.** Pour the buttermilk into a shallow bowl. Mix flour, cornmeal, cayenne, salt, and pepper on a large sheet of waxed paper.

**2.** Add onion rings to buttermilk and, using a fork, toss to coat. Sprinkle ½ cup of the flour mixture evenly on a baking sheet.

**3.** Heat oil in a 6-quart Dutch oven or heavy-bottomed pot to 325°F. Check temperature with a deep-fry thermometer.

**4.** Remove one-third of the onion rings from the buttermilk, shaking off excess, and toss in the flour mixture to coat. Place the rings on the flour-coated baking sheet.

**5.** Working in small batches, place coated rings carefully into hot oil. Cook until golden, gently turning with tongs, 2 to 3 minutes. Transfer rings to a paper towel-lined baking sheet.

**6.** Sprinkle another ½ cup of flour mixture evenly on the baking sheet and toss another one-third of the onion rings in the mixture to coat. Cook as above. Repeat with remaining ½ cup of flour mixture and rings. Serve hot.

**SERVES 6**

# TOMATO GRATIN

**This delicious gratin can be baked and served immediately or assembled and refrigerated overnight before baking. It uses sourdough bread that's now available sliced in supermarkets.**

8 slices sourdough or whole-wheat bread, toasted

2½ pounds large, ripe tomatoes, cut into ¼-inch-thick slices

1 garlic clove, minced

¼ cup snipped fresh chives

½ teaspoon salt

Freshly ground black pepper

1 cup (8 ounces) **HOMEMADE GOAT CHEESE (PAGE 77)** *or* **GOAT'S MILK FETA CHEESE (PAGE 80),**

1 tablespoon olive oil

2½ tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese

**1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Coat a shallow 2-quart baking dish lightly with cooking spray.

**2.** Arrange 4 slices of bread over the bottom of the baking dish, tearing to fit. Top with half of the tomato slices.

**3.** Sprinkle the garlic over the tomatoes, then sprinkle with half the chives. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Crumble the goat cheese over the chives and drizzle with 1½ teaspoons of the oil.

**4.** Top with the remaining bread slices, pressing firmly to fit. Arrange the remaining tomato slices on top, then sprinkle with the remaining chives, the Parmesan, and additional pepper to taste. Drizzle with the remaining 1½ teaspoons oil.

**5.** Bake for 40 to 45 minutes or until cheese on top is golden and the tomatoes are soft. Serve warm.

**SERVES 6**

# CORNMEAL BISCUITS

**Biscuits can be made 1 day ahead and cooled completely, then kept in an airtight container at room temperature. Reheat in a preheated 350°F oven for 10 minutes.**

1¾ cups unbleached all-purpose flour

¾ cup fine cornmeal

4 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon baking soda

1 teaspoon salt

¼ cup cold **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, cut into small pieces

1½ cups shredded extra-sharp cheddar cheese

3 tablespoons finely grated Parmesan cheese

3 scallions (white and light green parts), finely chopped

1 ⅓ cups **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well

**1.** Preheat oven to 450°F. Grease a large baking sheet.

**2.** Whisk together flour, cornmeal, baking powder, baking soda, and salt in a large bowl, then blend in butter with your fingertips, two knives, or a pastry blender until mixture resembles coarse meal. Stir in the cheddar, Parmesan, and scallions with a wooden spoon. Stir in buttermilk until just blended.

**3.** Drop dough in 8 equal mounds about 2 inches apart on the prepared baking sheet. Bake until golden, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a rack and cool to warm, about 10 minutes, then cut in half horizontally.

**MAKES 8**

# TWISTED WHEY-WHEAT ROLLS

**Save the whey when making ricotta or cream cheese and use it in this recipe. It adds great flavor. If whey isn't available, then substitute warm water. For the freshest texture and flavor eat the rolls within 12 hours. Leftovers can be stored, wrapped in plastic, at room temperature for up to 2 days.**

1 package active dry yeast
2 cups fresh whey (from ricotta or cream cheese), warmed to 105 to 115°F
¼ cup sugar
2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31),** melted
1 cup whole-wheat flour
3½-4 cups bread flour or unbleached all-purpose flour
1 egg
2 tablespoons milk

**1.** Dissolve the yeast in the warm whey. Stir in the sugar, salt, and butter and let stand 5 minutes or until foamy.

**2.** Add the whole-wheat flour and beat well. Slowly mix in enough of the bread flour to make a stiff dough. (The dough can also be mixed in a standing mixer using a dough hook.)

**3.** Invert the dough onto a lightly floured surface, cover with a kitchen towel, and let rest 15 minutes. Knead the dough until smooth and elastic, about 10 minutes.

**4.** Place the dough into a large greased bowl, turning to coat. Cover and let rise in a warm, draft-free spot until doubled in volume, about 1 hour.

**5.** Punch down the dough and turn out onto a lightly oiled board. Cut the dough in half.

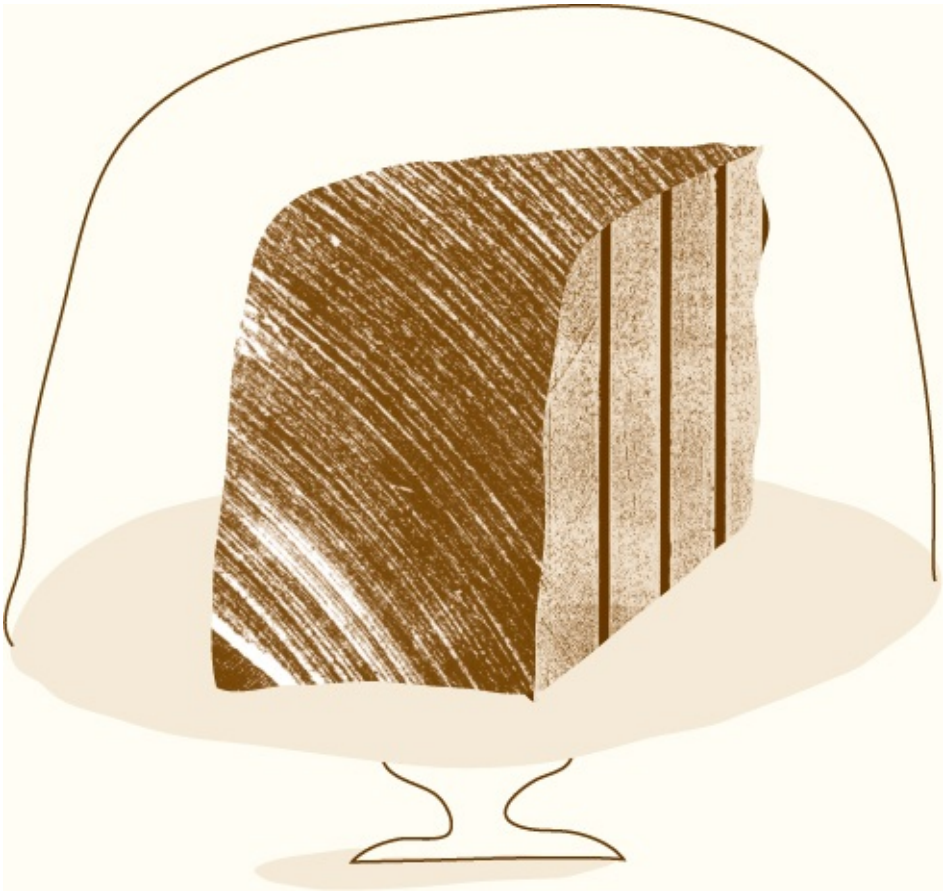
**6.** Preheat oven to 400°F. Cut each dough half into 10 pieces. Shape each piece into a 14-inch rope. Fold the rope in half, and seal the ends together. Twist, and then coil into a roll. Tuck ends under. Place on a lightly greased baking sheet. Repeat with remaining dough half. Let rolls rise in a warm, draft-free place until doubled, about 30 minutes.

**7.** Beat together the egg and the milk in a small bowl. Brush the rolls lightly with this glaze. Bake the rolls for about 12 minutes or until lightly browned. Serve warm or at room temperature.

**MAKES ABOUT 20**

# DESSERTS GALORE

On these pages is a collection of irresistible pies, tarts, and puddings featuring a variety of flavors — fruit, nuts, custard, cream, and more. From traditional to exotic to rich and sinful, you'll find just the right dessert to treat the kids or to serve to dinner guests.



Chocolate Buttermilk Layer Cake
Chocolate Sour Cream Cake
Orange Cream Cheese Pound Cake
Spice Cake with Pecan Frosting
Fudge-Swirl Cappuccino Cheesecake
Pumpkin Cheesecake with Sour Cream Topping
No-Bake Lemon-Raspberry Cheesecake
Italian Ricotta Tart
Cherry Cheese Tart
Tiramisu
Sour Cream Raisin Pie
Ricotta Pudding with Nuts and Chocolate
Coffee Mascarpone
Cream Cheese Brownies

Brownie Shortbread
Pecan Swirls
Coeur à la Crème
Poached Pears and Ricotta
Peach Melba Yogurt Parfaits
Tropical Frappé

# CHOCOLATE BUTTERMILK LAYER CAKE

**Your childhood may be many years behind you, but this old-fashioned layer cake will take you back. The cake can be prepared 1 day ahead. Cover and refrigerate. Bring to room temperature before serving.**

**CHOCOLATE FROSTING**

- 1 cup heavy cream
- ½ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31),** cut into small pieces
- ⅓ cup sugar
- ¼ cup water
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 16 ounces semisweet chocolate, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

**CAKE**

- 1½ cups unsweetened cocoa powder, plus more for dusting
- 3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 3 cups sugar
- 1 tablespoon baking soda
- 1½ teaspoons baking powder
- 1½ teaspoons salt
- ¾ cup vegetable oil
- 1½ cups **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39),** stirred well
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract
- 3 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1½ cups hot water

**1.** Make the frosting: Combine the cream, butter, sugar, water, and salt in a large saucepan and bring to a simmer over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Remove the pan from the heat. Add the chocolate and whisk until melted and smooth. Whisk in the vanilla. Pour the frosting into a large bowl, and let cool until thick enough to spread, stirring occasionally, about

3 hours.

**2.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter two 8- or 9-inch round cake pans and dust with cocoa, tapping out excess.

**3.** Make the cake: Sift cocoa, flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder, and salt into a large bowl. Beat in oil, buttermilk, vanilla, eggs, and hot water with an electric mixer set at low. Beat until smooth, about 2 minutes.

**4.** Pour the batter into the prepared pans. Gently tap each filled pan gently on the countertop to remove any air pockets. Bake for 45 to 55 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the centers comes out clean. Set the cakes in pans to cool on wire racks about 20 minutes. Run a knife around sides of cakes and turn out onto rack. Cool completely.

**5.** Place one cake layer on a plate. Spread one-third of the frosting over the cake. Top with the second layer, and spread the remaining frosting over the top and sides of the cake. Let cake stand for 2 hours before serving.

**MAKES ONE 8-INCH LAYER CAKE**

# CHOCOLATE SOUR CREAM CAKE

**Sour cream gives baked goods such as this a dense, rich texture and moist, tender crumb. This cake is portable, it's tasty, and it will keep well up to 1 week.**

2½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
1 cup unsweetened cocoa powder, preferably Dutch process
1 teaspoon baking soda
½ teaspoon salt
1½ cups **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, softened
3 cups granulated sugar
5 eggs, at room temperature
2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1 cup **HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM (PAGES 50 AND 52)**
1 cup boiling water Confectioners' sugar, for dusting

**1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter and flour a 10-cup Bundt pan.

**2.** Whisk together the flour, cocoa powder, baking soda, and salt in a medium bowl. Beat the butter in a large bowl with an electric mixer until creamy. Beat in the granulated sugar until light and fluffy. Add the eggs 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in the vanilla. At low speed, beat in the flour mixture on low speed, alternating with the sour cream until well blended. Beat in boiling water slowly on low speed.

**3.** Pour the cake batter into the prepared pan and bake for about 1 hour 5 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Let the cake cool in the pan for 5 minutes, then turn out onto a wire rack and let cool completely. Dust lightly with confectioners' sugar before slicing and serving.

**SERVES 8 TO 10**

# ORANGE CREAM CHEESE POUND CAKE

**Cut this close-textured, superbly rich pound cake into thin slices and serve with fresh fruit for dessert. It can be made 3 days ahead, wrapped airtight, and kept at room temperature.**

1 cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, softened

1 cup (8 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**, softened

2½ cups sugar

1 teaspoon salt

6 eggs, at room temperature

¼ cup frozen orange juice concentrate, thawed

1 tablespoon vanilla extract

3 cups sifted unbleached all-purpose flour

**1.** Preheat oven to 325°F. Butter and flour a 12-cup Bundt pan. Beat the butter and cream cheese in a large bowl with an electric mixer until fluffy, about 4 minutes. Add the sugar and salt and beat 10 minutes, scraping down sides of the bowl occasionally. Add the eggs 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Beat in the orange juice concentrate and vanilla. Beat in the flour at low speed until batter is smooth (do not overbeat). Transfer batter to pan.

**2.** Bake for 1 hour 15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool cake in pan on rack for 15 minutes. Turn out cake onto rack; cool completely.

**SERVES 12 TO 16**

# SPICE CAKE WITH PECAN FROSTING

**This spiced layer cake, fragrant with cinnamon and cloves and topped with old-fashioned boiled icing, will conjure images of a country kitchen from days gone by. Store the cake at cool room temperature until serving time; then loosely cover and refrigerate up to 2 days.**

**CAKE**

- ½ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, softened
- 1¼ cups sugar
- 1 egg
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- ¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cloves
- 1½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1 cup **HOMEMADE BUTTERMILK (PAGES 38 AND 39)**, stirred well

**PECAN FROSTING**

- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup finely chopped pecans

**1.** Preheat oven 350°F. Butter two 8-inch round cake pans lightly. Line the bottoms with parchment and lightly butter the paper.

**2.** Make the cake: Beat the butter and ¾ cup of the sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer until smooth. Add the egg and beat until the mixture is pale and fluffy. Beat in the vanilla.

**3.** Whisk together the remaining ½ cup of sugar, cocoa, baking soda, salt,

cinnamon, and cloves in a medium bowl. Add to the egg mixture and beat until blended. With the mixer on low, add the flour alternately with the buttermilk, beating well after each addition. Pour the batter in the prepared pans, dividing evenly and smoothing the tops. Tap each filled pan gently on the countertop to remove any air pockets.

**4.** Bake for 35 to 40 minutes or until the cakes pull away from the sides of the pans and a toothpick inserted near the centers comes out clean. Set the cakes in the pans on a wire rack to cool for 10 minutes. Turn out onto the rack and remove the waxed paper. Turn the cakes right side up and cool completely.

**5.** Make the frosting: Mix the cream, sugar, and egg in a medium saucepan. Cook over medium-high heat, stirring constantly, until mixture comes to a boil. Boil for 2 minutes, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens. Remove the pan from the heat. Stir in the vanilla and pecans. Let cool completely.

**6.** Place one cake layer on plate. Spread one-third of the frosting over the cake. Top with the second layer, and spread the remaining frosting over the top and sides of the cake. Let cake stand for 2 hours before serving.

**SERVES 8 TO 10**

# FUDGE-SWIRL CAPPUCCINO CHEESECAKE

**If you like coffee, you'll love this mellow, richly coffee-flavored cheesecake. Make this at least 1 day before you want to serve it so the flavors can develop.**

**CRUST**

- 1½ cups chocolate wafer crumbs (30 chocolate wafers)
- 3 tablespoons **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, melted
- 2 tablespoons sugar

**FILLING**

- 1 cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour
- 4 cups (2 pounds) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60),**
- 2 eggs
- 2 egg whites
- 2 tablespoons instant espresso or ¼ cup instant coffee granules
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ½ cup hot fudge topping

**1.** Preheat oven to 325°F.

**2.** Make the crust: Mix the cookie crumbs, butter, and sugar in a small bowl. Coat a 9-inch springform pan with cooking spray and press the cookie mixture into the bottom of the pan. Bake for 10 minutes. Let cool on a wire rack.

**3.** Increase oven temperature to 450°F.

**4.** Make the filling: Beat the sugar, flour, and cream cheese in a large bowl with a mixer set on medium speed until smooth. Add the eggs and egg whites 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Add the espresso, vanilla, and cinnamon; beat well.

**5.** Pour the cheese mixture into the prepared crust.

**6.** Spoon 4 mounds of fudge topping (2 tablespoons each) onto the cheese mixture. Using a knife, swirl together the mixtures gently without disturbing the crust. Bake for 15 minutes.

**7.** Reduce oven temperature to 250°F (do not remove cheesecake from oven). Bake 1 hour or until almost set. Remove cheesecake from the oven and let cool to room temperature. Cover and chill at least 8 hours before serving.

**SERVES 12**

# PUMPKIN CHEESECAKE WITH SOUR CREAM TOPPING

**When I owned a bakery, called Great Cakes, this cheesecake was always a best seller for the Thanksgiving holiday. This recipe combines the richness of cream cheese, pumpkin, and a sour cream topping.**

**CRUST**

- ¾ cup graham cracker crumbs (10½ graham cracker squares)
- ½ cup finely chopped pecans
- ¼ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- ¼ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, melted and cooled

**FILLING**

- 1 (15-ounce) can solid-pack pumpkin (not pie filling)
- 3 eggs
- 1½ teaspoons cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ½ teaspoon ground ginger
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ cup firmly packed light brown sugar
- 3 cups (1½ pounds) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

**TOPPING**

- 2 cups **HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM (PAGES 50 AND 52)**
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 tablespoon bourbon liqueur *or* bourbon
- 16 pecan halves for garnish

**1.** Make the crust: Combine the cracker crumbs, pecans, brown sugar, and granulated sugar in a medium bowl. Stir in the butter. Butter a 9-inch springform pan. Press the crumb mixture into the bottom and ½ inch up the sides of the pan. Chill the crust for 1 hour.

**2.** Preheat oven to 350°F.

**3.** Make the filling: Whisk together the pumpkin, eggs, cinnamon, nutmeg, ginger, salt, and brown sugar in a medium bowl. Beat the cream cheese and granulated sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer until smooth. Add the cream, cornstarch, vanilla, and pumpkin mixture and beat until smooth.

**4.** Pour the filling into the prepared crust. Bake for 50 to 55 minutes or until the center is just set and let it cool in the pan on a rack for 5 minutes.

**5.** Make the topping: Whisk together the sour cream, granulated sugar, and bourbon liqueur in a medium bowl. Spread the mixture over the top of the cheesecake. Bake the cheesecake for 5 minutes longer. Let the cheesecake cool in the pan on a rack, then chill it, covered, overnight. Remove the side of the pan and garnish the top of the cheesecake with the pecans.

**SERVES 16**

# NO-BAKE LEMON-RASPBERRY CHEESECAKE

**Yogurt cheese makes a low-calorie substitution for cream cheese in this easy-to-make cheesecake. Because it doesn't require baking it's a great summertime dessert.**

1½ cups **YOGURT CHEESE (PAGE 18)** (from 4 cups homemade yogurt)
¾ cup graham cracker crumbs (10½ graham cracker squares)
1 tablespoon granulated sugar
2 tablespoons **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, melted
1½ cups confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons grated lemon zest
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 cup fresh raspberries

**1.** Make the crust: Mix the cracker crumbs and granulated sugar in a small bowl. Add the butter and toss with a fork to moisten evenly. Press the mixture into bottom of an ungreased 8- or 9-inch springform pan. Cover and refrigerate until firm, at least 1 hour.

**2.** Make the filling: Mix the yogurt cheese, confectioners' sugar, lemon zest, and lemon juice in a medium bowl.

**3.** Spoon the filling into the chilled crust. Smooth the surface with a rubber spatula. Cover and chill for at least 2 hours, or overnight if possible. (The cheesecake can be covered and refrigerated up to 2 days.)

**4.** Run a knife between the cheesecake and the pan sides to loosen. Remove the pan sides. Leave the cheesecake on the base. Mound the raspberries in the center before serving.

**SERVES 8**

# ITALIAN RICOTTA TART

**Similar to cheesecake but not as rich and filling, this tart is good served with fresh berries or sliced peaches or plums. Homemade ricotta makes the filling extra rich and flavorful.**

1 (9-inch) piecrust

2 eggs

⅔ cup sugar

2 cups (1 pound) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**

1 teaspoon grated lemon zest

1 teaspoon grated orange zest

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

¼ teaspoon salt

¼ cup toasted, chopped walnuts

**1.** Preheat oven to 375°F. Line a 9-inch tart pan with a removable bottom with the dough. Prick the pastry all over with a fork and bake 10 to 15 minutes or until lightly browned. Let cool on a wire rack.

**2.** Reduce oven temperature to 350°F. Beat the eggs and sugar in a medium bowl with an electric mixer until well blended. Beat in ricotta, lemon zest, orange zest, vanilla, and salt until blended.

**3.** Spoon the ricotta mixture into the prepared tart shell. Sprinkle the top with the nuts. Bake just until set, 45 to 50 minutes. Let cool on a rack. Serve at room temperature.

**SERVES 6**

# CHERRY CHEESE TART

**Cream cheese and cherries are a classic combination, and they both shine in this no-bake dessert.**

**CRUST**

22 chocolate wafer cookies, processed into crumbs

¼ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, softened

2 tablespoons sugar

**FILLING**

1 cup (8 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**, softened

1½ cups milk

2 tablespoons sugar

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

1 (3½-ounce) package instant vanilla-pudding mix

1 (21-ounce) can cherry pie filling

**1.** Make the crust: Put the cookie crumbs, butter, and sugar into a food processor and process until the crumbs are moistened. Press mixture evenly over bottom and up sides of an 8- or 9-inch tart pan with a removable bottom. Refrigerate until firm, at least 30 minutes.

**2.** Make the filling: Beat the cream cheese, milk, sugar, and vanilla in a large bowl with an electric mixer until blended and smooth. Add the pudding mix and beat on low speed for 1 minute or until blended and slightly thickened. Spread the filling into the chilled crust. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until set, at least 3 hours.

**3.** To serve, remove the side of the pan. (If necessary, use a small knife to loosen the crust from the sides of the pan.) You can leave the tart on the pan bottom for serving or, using a spatula, loosen the tart from the pan bottom and slide it onto a serving plate. Just before serving, spoon the cherry pie filling evenly over cheese layer.

**SERVES 8**

# TIRAMISU

**In Italy, this dessert, which literally means “pick me up,” is always made with fresh mascarpone. Now you can duplicate that taste at home.**

2 cups (1 pound) **HOMEMADE MASCARPONE (PAGE 90)**

¼ cup sugar

3 tablespoons dark rum

1 cup heavy cream

24 ladyfingers

1½ cups brewed espresso, chilled

8 ounces semisweet chocolate, finely chopped

**1.** Mix the mascarpone, sugar, and rum until smooth.

**2.** Beat the cream in a medium bowl with an electric mixer until stiff peaks form. Fold the whipped cream gently into the mascarpone mixture.

**3.** Moisten 12 of the ladyfingers lightly with espresso and arrange in a 2-quart glass dish with straight sides or an 8-inch-square glass baking dish. Spread half of the mascarpone mixture over the ladyfingers and sprinkle with half of the chocolate. Repeat the layers with the remaining ingredients. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour or overnight.

**SERVES 8**

# SOUR CREAM RAISIN PIE

**The flavor and plain old appeal of this Southern favorite are universal. It's easy to make and just as easy to eat. The light meringue topping over the custardlike filling makes a delicious contrast.**

1 (9-inch) piecrust

1 cup raisins

1 cup boiling water

1⅓ cups sugar

6 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour

⅓ teaspoon salt

2¼ cups whole milk

3 eggs, separated

½ cup **HOMEMADE SOUR CREAM (PAGES 50 AND 52)**

¼ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, cut into small pieces

½ teaspoon vanilla extract

¼ teaspoon cream of tartar

**1.** Preheat oven to 400°F. Line a 9-inch tart pan with the dough. Prick the pastry all over with a fork and line the pastry with a double thickness of foil. Bake 10 minutes or until lightly colored. Remove the foil and bake another 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Let cool on a wire rack.

**2.** Combine raisins with boiling water in a small bowl and let stand for 5 minutes, then drain and set aside.

**3.** Whisk together 1 cup of the sugar, the flour, and the salt in a large saucepan. Whisk in the milk gradually. Cook over medium heat, whisking often, until thickened and bubbly, 5 to 8 minutes. Reduce the heat and cook 2 minutes longer, stirring constantly. Remove the pan from the heat.

**4.** Beat the egg yolks slightly in a medium bowl. Gradually stir about 1 cup of the hot milk mixture into yolks. Return this mixture to the saucepan and

cook 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove the pan from the heat. Stir in the sour cream, butter, and raisins until just mixed. Pour the filling into the baked pie shell.

**5.** Beat the egg whites, vanilla, and cream of tartar in a medium bowl with an electric mixer on medium speed until soft peaks form. Add the remaining ⅓ cup sugar gradually, beating at high speed until stiff peaks form. Spread the meringue over the pie filling, sealing to the edge. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the meringue topping is golden. Set the pie on a wire rack to cool completely before serving.

**SERVES 8 TO 10**

# RICOTTA PUDDING WITH NUTS AND CHOCOLATE

**This easy dessert is great served with fresh fruit or biscotti.**

4 cups (2 pounds) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**
¼ cup superfine sugar
½ cup (2½ ounces) coarsely chopped semisweet chocolate
¼ cup chopped nuts or raisins (optional)

**1.** Put the ricotta in a large fine-meshed sieve set over a large bowl and let drain about 20 minutes. Discard the liquid.

**2.** Transfer the ricotta to a serving bowl. Stir in the sugar until smooth. Fold in the chocolate. Serve right away or store airtight in the refrigerator for up to 1 day.

**3.** To serve, stir in the nuts or raisins if desired.

**SERVES 6 TO 8**

# COFFEE MASCARPONE

**Recipes don’t get much simpler than this Italian-style dessert. It’s great served with biscotti.**

2 tablespoons sugar

1 teaspoon powdered instant espresso

2 tablespoons dark rum (optional)

1 cup (8 ounces) **HOMEMADE MASCARPONE (PAGE 90)**

**1.** Mix together the sugar, espresso, and rum in a small bowl until the sugar and espresso dissolve.

**2.** Put the mascarpone in a medium bowl. Add the espresso mixture and mix thoroughly.

**3.** Spoon the mascarpone mixture into serving cups and serve.

**SERVES 4**

# CREAM CHEESE BROWNIES

**These brownies could easily become a family favorite for those who love chocolate. Serve the brownies dusted with confectioners' sugar or pair them with vanilla ice cream for a rich, decadent dessert.**

⅔ cup unbleached all-purpose flour

¼ teaspoon salt

½ teaspoon baking powder

8 ounces semisweet chocolate, broken into small pieces

½ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**

1¼ cups sugar

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

3 eggs

½ cup (4 ounces) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**, softened

1 egg yolk

**1.** Preheat oven to 325°F. Whisk together the flour, salt, and baking powder in a small bowl; set aside. Coat an 8-inch-square baking pan with cooking spray.

**2.** Melt chocolate with the butter in the top of a double-boiler set over simmering (not boiling) water, stirring until smooth. Remove the pan from the water, transfer the chocolate to a large bowl, and let cool. Whisk in 1 cup of the sugar and 1½ teaspoons of the vanilla until blended. Whisk in the eggs 1 at a time, stirring well after each addition. Continue whisking until mixture is completely smooth. Add the flour mixture; whisk until just blended.

**3.** Beat cream cheese with an electric mixer in a medium bowl with the remaining ¼ cup sugar, the remaining ½ teaspoon vanilla, and the egg yolk until blended.

**4.** Pour half of the brownie batter into the prepared pan. Spoon half of the cream cheese mixture over the batter. Repeat layering. Use blade of a table

knife or a spoon handle to swirl batter and cream cheese filling gently, creating a marbled effect.

**5.** Bake for 50 to 60 minutes or until edges of brownies have puffed slightly and the center feels not quite firm when touched lightly.

**6.** Cool the brownies completely in the pan on a wire rack before serving.

**MAKES 16 BROWNIES**

# BROWNIE SHORTBREAD

**These delectable bars begin with a layer of shortbread pastry that's baked twice — once alone and again with a topping of brownie batter.**

**SHORTBREAD CRUST**

- ½ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, softened
- 1 cup unbleached all-purpose flour
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt

**TOPPING**

- ½ cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, softened
- 3 ounces unsweetened chocolate
- 2 eggs
- ¾ cup sugar
- 3 tablespoons unbleached all-purpose flour
- ½ teaspoon baking powder

**1.** Preheat oven to 350°F. Butter an 11- by 7-inch baking pan.

**2.** Make the crust: Combine the butter, flour, sugar, and salt in a food processor and process until the mixture holds together and forms a dough. Press into the bottom of the prepared pan.

**3.** Bake for 20 minutes or until light golden and firm when touched.

**4.** Make the topping: Melt the butter and chocolate in a small saucepan over low heat, stirring often, until melted. Cool 5 minutes.

**5.** Whisk together the eggs, sugar, flour, and baking powder in a medium bowl until blended. Whisk in the cooled chocolate mixture. Pour over shortbread base.

**6.** Bake for 20 minutes or until top feels firm. Cool in pan before cutting into 24 bars.

**MAKES 24 BARS**

# PECAN SWIRLS

**Pecans permeate these tender, buttery cookies, promising an abundance of toasted nut flavor in every bite. To freeze dough for longer storage, wrap it in heavy-duty aluminum foil; it will keep up to 1 month.**

**DOUGH**

2½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour

½ cup granulated sugar

¼ cup firmly packed light brown sugar

¼ teaspoon salt

1 cup **HOMEMADE BUTTER (PAGES 28 AND 31)**, cut into small pieces, softened

2 teaspoons vanilla extract

2 tablespoons **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**, softened

**PECAN FILLING**

1½ cups (6 ounces) toasted pecans cooled

¼ cup pure maple syrup

2 eggs, separated

**1.** Make the dough: Beat the flour, granulated sugar, brown sugar, and salt in a large bowl with an electric mixer on low speed until blended. With the mixer running on low, add the butter and beat until the mixture looks crumbly. Add the vanilla and cream cheese and beat on low speed until the dough begins to form large clumps.

**2.** Turn out the dough onto a work surface and knead briefly. Form the dough into a 7-inch square, wrap in plastic, and refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes.

**3.** Make the filling: Pulse the pecans in a food processor until finely ground. Add the maple syrup in a steady stream through the feed tube while pulsing, then add the egg yolks, and process until blended. Transfer to a small bowl, cover with plastic wrap, and refrigerate until needed.

**4.** Roll the chilled dough between 2 large sheets of parchment paper to an 11-

by 16-inch rectangle, about ¼ inch thick.

**5.** Spread the pecan filling evenly over the dough, leaving ½-inch border around all edges. Starting from a long end, roll dough tightly and press to seal seam. Wrap the dough log in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, about 30 minutes.

**6.** Preheat oven to 375°F. Slice the log into ¼-inch thick rounds. Arrange the rounds about 1 inch apart on parchment-lined baking sheets. Beat the egg whites lightly; brush the rounds with egg whites. Bake about 12 minutes or until lightly golden brown. Cool on wire rack to room temperature.

**MAKES ABOUT 48 COOKIES**

# COEUR À LA CRÈME

**This classic molded cheese dessert is traditionally made in a heart-shaped basket or ceramic mold with holes on the bottom so the mixture can drain as it sets. The molds are available in kitchen supply or gourmet food shops. The dessert is wonderful served with fresh, juicy strawberries.**

2 cups (1 pound) **HOMEMADE CREAM CHEESE (PAGE 60)**

1 cup (8 ounces) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**

¼ cup confectioners' sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

**1.** Have ready a 6-cup coeur à la crème mold lined with butter muslin. Beat cream cheese and ricotta in a medium bowl with an electric mixer until smooth, light, and fluffy. Beat in sugar and vanilla until blended.

**2.** Turn cream cheese mixture into muslin. Fold edges of cloth over top. Place into a baking pan to catch drips, and top with a 2-pound weight (such as a plate topped with a 20-ounce can). Refrigerate with weight 8 to 12 hours.

**3.** To serve, unwrap the cheese and unmold onto a serving plate.

**SERVES 6 TO 8**

# POACHED PEARS AND RICOTTA

**Pears poached in this robust port syrup take on a new dimension. This recipe can also be made with peaches when they're in season.**

2 cups port wine

¾ cup pure maple syrup

2 medium pears, such as Anjou or Bosc, peeled, halved, and cored

1 cup (8 ounces) **HOMEMADE RICOTTA (PAGES 70 AND 72)**

1 tablespoon sugar

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

**1.** Combine the port and maple syrup in a medium saucepan and mix well. Add the pears and bring the mixture to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat, cover, and simmer, turning pears occasionally until they're tender when pierced with a knife, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat and let pears cool in poaching liquid.

**2.** Remove the pears from the poaching liquid. Place poaching liquid over medium-high heat and cook until it becomes thick and syrupy, about 5 minutes. Set aside and let cool.

**3.** To serve, mix the ricotta, sugar, and vanilla in a small bowl. Place one pear half on a serving plate. Spoon the ricotta mixture into each pear cavity and drizzle with poaching liquid. Serve right away.

**SERVES 4**

# PEACH MELBA YOGURT PARFAITS

***Parfait* is the French word for "perfect," and that's the best way to describe this visually appealing dessert that not only tastes good, but is good for you as well.**

2 cups **HOMEMADE YOGURT (PAGE 15)**
¼ cup honey
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 ripe peaches, peeled and sliced
1 cup fresh or frozen raspberries, thawed
1 cup granola without raisins

**1.** Mix yogurt, honey, and vanilla in a small bowl until well blended.

**2.** Spoon ¼ cup of the yogurt mixture into each of four 8-ounce dessert glasses. Top with a few peach slices, some raspberries, and 2 tablespoons of the granola. Repeat the layers, ending with granola. Serve right away.

**SERVES 4**

# TROPICAL FRAPPÈ

**A frappé is similar to a breakfast smoothie, but it's made mostly with fruits instead of dairy products, and it's sweet enough to serve for dessert.**

- 2⅓ cups banana chunks (about 3 medium bananas)
- ½ cup orange sections (about 1 medium orange)
- ¾ cup pineapple juice
- 2 tablespoons thawed orange juice concentrate
- 1 cup **HOMEMADE YOGURT (PAGE 15)**
- 1 (8-ounce) can pineapple chunks in juice, undrained

Combine banana, orange sections, pineapple juice, orange juice concentrate, yogurt, and pineapple chunks with juice in a blender. Cover and process until smooth. Serve right away.

**SERVES 2**

# GLOSSARY

**ACIDITY.** A tart flavor produced in cheese by the lactic acid in milk. Fresh cheeses and dairy products have a low acidity level.

**AGING.** Also called ripening, this is a step in cheese making in which the cheese is stored at a particular temperature and relative humidity for a specified time to develop its distinct flavor and firm texture. Fresh cheeses are not aged.

**CHEESE CULTURE.** A bacterial culture added to milk as the first step in making many cheeses. The bacteria produce acid during their life cycles in the milk.

**CLEAN BREAK.** The condition of the curds when they're ready for cutting. Once they've reached this point, a finger or thermometer inserted into the curds at a 45-degree angle will separate them firmly and cleanly.

**COAGULATION.** The process of thickening milk with an acid or rennet. Coagulated milk has a custardlike consistency.

**CREAM.** The substance that rises to the top of raw milk. By law, cream can be used only to label products with more than 18 percent milk fat. Half-and-half (a mixture of cream and milk) has milk fat content from 10.5 to 18 percent.

**CREAM-LINE MILK.** See raw milk.

**CULTURED.** A dairy product in which bacteria cultures have been added to develop texture and flavor.

**CURDS.** The custardlike solids that form in milk with the addition of rennet. The curds contain most of the milk protein and fat.

**DRAINING.** The process of removing the liquid whey from the curds by pouring the mix into a butter muslin–lined colander to separate.

**FERMENTATION.** The process by which a microorganism breaks down a complex substance into simpler ones. With cheese, the fermenting agent is beneficial bacteria from the starter culture that converts milk sugar (lactose) into lactic acid.

**HOMOGENIZATION.** A process that breaks up milk fat into small globules and disperses them evenly throughout the milk. Once milk has been homogenized, the cream will not rise to the top.

**LACTIC ACID.** An organic acid created by the fermentation of the milk sugar/lactose by beneficial bacteria in a starter culture used to turn milk into cheese. It gives cheese its acidity and helps preserve it.

**MOLDING.** Once cheese is made, the drained curds can be placed in a cheese mold. The cheese mold will help produce the final shape of the cheese and aids in drainage. Cheese molds can be made from plastic, wicker, or ceramic.

**PASTEURIZATION.** The process of heating raw milk to at least 145°F for 30 minutes or to 161°F for 15 seconds. The milk is then cooled quickly to 45°F or lower. This destroys harmful bacteria and organisms.

**PRESSING.** A step in cheese making during which the curds are placed in a butter muslin–lined mold and placed under pressure to remove more whey and minimize fat loss.

**RAW MILK.** Also known as unprocessed or cream-line, this milk has not been processed and the cream will rise to the top.

**RENNET (ANIMAL).** Rennet is derived from the fourth stomach of a milk-fed calf. It contains the enzyme rennin, which has the ability to coagulate milk. Animal rennet is available in liquid and tablet form.

**RENNET (VEGETABLE).** This term usually refers to microbial rennets, derived from molds produced in a fermenter.

**RIPENING.** A step in cheese making in which the milk is allowed to age for a period of time. During this time, acidity increases because of the activity of cheese-starter bacteria.

**SALTING.** A step in cheese making in which coarse flake salt is added to the curds before molding or to the surface of the finished cheese.

**STARTER CULTURE.** Selected strains of harmless living bacteria — mostly lactic acid bacteria — that are added to milk as one of the first steps in the cheese-making process in order to preserve the nutrients from spoilage through

controlled fermentation. These bacteria consume the milk sugar/lactose, transforming it into lactic acid, while enzymes in the culture transform proteins to build the structure that holds the nutrients. Starter enzymes contribute to flavor development in cheese.

**SOFT CHEESE.** A cheese that is neither aged nor pressed and may be made from milk or buttermilk. Soft cheeses also contain a high moisture content (50 to 75 percent).

**ULTRA-PASTEURIZATION.** This process heats raw milk to 275°F for 2 to 4 seconds. Ultra-pasteurized milk will keep from 60 to 90 days under refrigeration if the package isn't opened. This milk doesn't work well for making cheese; the high heat process doesn't allow curds to form.

**WHEY**. The liquid by-product of cheese making that develops after coagulation of the milk protein. Whey contains water, milk sugar, albuminous proteins, and minerals and can be used as an ingredient in producing other foods such as ricotta.

# SOURCES

# CHEESE-MAKING SUPPLIES

**Glengarry Cheesemaking and Dairy Supply**
**888-816-0903**
*www.glengarrycheesemaking.on.ca*
Specializes in equipment, supplies, and accessories, including molds, ingredients, and other cheese-making supplies.

**New England Cheesemaking Supply**
**413-628-3808**
*www.cheesemaking.com*
Everything you need to make cheese at home, plus kits for the beginner and workshops.

**Dairy Connection**
**608-242-9030**
*www.dairyconnection.com*
Offers cheese-making equipment, supplies, and cultures specifically for home production.

**Hoegger Supply**
**800-221-4628**
*www.hoeggergoatsupply.com*
Offers cheese-making supplies, kits, churns, kefir grains, and more.

**Leeners**
**800-543-3697**
*www.leeners.com*
Offers a variety of cheese-making supplies, kits, and instruction guides.

**Moonwise Herbs**

**920-457-9290**
*www.moonwiseherbs.com*
You can purchase kefir grains and piima cultures online through this site.

# CHEESE-MAKING CLASSES

**Dairy Foods Consulting Peter Dixon, Artisan Cheesemaker**
**862-387-4041**
*www.dairyfoodsconsulting.com*
Offers artisan cheese-making classes throughout the United States.

**Vermont Institute for Artisan Cheese University of Vermont**
**802-656-8300**
*http://nutrition.uvm.edu/viac*
Offers a variety of cheese-making classes.

**Bobolink Dairy**
**973-764-4888**
*www.cowsoutside.com*
Located in New Jersey, this dairy farm offers artisan cheese-making classes using milk from its grass-fed cows.

**The University of California at Davis**
*http://ceglenn.ucdavis.edu/Dairy/Farmstead_Cheesemaking_Workshop.htm*
Offers farmstead cheese-making workshops through the Glenn County Cooperative Extension.

**Washington State University Creamery**
**800-457-5442**
*www.wsu.edu/creamery*
Offers extension programs for beginners as well as experienced industry professionals.

**Wisconsin Center for Dairy Research**
**University of Wisconsin**
*www.cdr.wisc.edu/courses*
Offers many courses on cheese making.

# OTHER USEFUL LINKS

**Fiasco Farm**
*http://fiascofarm.com*
Helps home cheese makers learn about simple, inexpensive methods for making quality cheeses and dairy products for home use.

**Cheese.com**
*www.cheese.com*
Search the database of more than 650 cheeses by name, by country of origin, by kind of milk used to produce a cheese, or by texture.

**ilovecheese.com**
*www.ilovecheese.com*
Find everything cheese, from recipes and pairings to entertaining tips. While there, sign up for the Cheese Chatter quarterly e-newsletter.

**Slow Food**
*www.slowfood.com*
Slow Food promotes the pleasures of the table and mounts a defense against the eroding effects of the fast life through the support of sustainable agriculture and traditional foods and their production methods. An international movement, there are 12,000 members in the United States.

## METRIC CONVERSION

**Unless you have finely calibrated measuring equipment, conversions between U.S. and metric measurements will be somewhat inexact. It's important to convert the measurements for all of the ingredients in a recipe to maintain the same proportions as the original.**

**GENERAL FORMULA FOR METRIC CONVERSION**

**Ounces to grams multiply ounces by 28.35**

**Grams to ounces multiply grams by 0.035**

**Pounds to grams multiply pounds by 453.5**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Pounds to kilograms** | **multiply pounds by 0.45 Cups to liters multiply cups by 0.24** |
| **Fahrenheit to Celsius** | **subtract 32 from Fahrenheit temperature, multiply by 5, then divide by 9** |
| **Celsius to Fahrenheit** | **multiply Celsius temperature by 9, divide by 5, then add 32** |

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